THE PRIEST:

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

"Wolves shall succeed for teachers, grievous wolves,
"Who all the sacred mysteries of Heaven
"To their own vile advantages shall turn
"Of lucre and ambition, and the truth
"With superstitions and traditions taint."—*Milton*.

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THE PRIEST.

CHAPTER XIII.

"O, in what tempests do *men's* fortunes sail!
Still wracked with winds more foul and contrary
Than any northern gust or southern flawe,
That ever yet enforced the sea to gape,
And swallow the poor merchant's traffick up!"

Ben Jonson.

IT was the close of the day when a messenger, in a plain dark grey cloak, stood before the gates of the castle of Arding, and craved audience of its Lord, on matters of moment, which must be revealed only to his private ear.

Whilst this message was being conveyed to the Earl, the courier was con-

ducted to the apartment of the Seneschal.

The going down of the sun was the signal for the commencement of Shirley's solitary conviviality, and he stood at the opening casement, watching the lingering light in the west, and impatiently longing for its disappearance; for he was too methodical to be guilty of such an innovation on his prescribed rule of conduct, as to antedate his hour of enjoyment, how much soever he might thirst after it.

The entrance of the cloaked messenger diverted the current of his thoughts, and he welcomed him courteously, because, said he, "conversation is a time-killer, and peradventure the stranger cometh laden with news of the times, and I may prevail on him to leave some part of his cargo with me. A fresh supply prevents the stream of a man's thoughts from stagnating, and a wise

man will, therefore, surely procure it if he may do so without risk or venture."

Having come to this conclusion, he addressed himself to welcome the stranger with hospitable courtesy.

"Right welcome hither, friend; I pray thee content thyself here for the present, and accept such rest and refreshment as thou mayest require after a journey on a day like this, especially if it hath been of great extent."

"Some thirty miles or upwards," replied he in the cloak, "which is not very hard riding to him, who hath the custom of doing twice as much on a stretch, without breathing."

"For riding over much ground in little space, set me a man across a good horse," said the Steward; "truly I apprehend there were few better riders than myself between Land's-end and John o'Groats, until, in some unaccountable manner, I lost the slenderness of my proportions;

and I find it harder to keep up a walking pace now, than to gallop over miles some score of years since."

"I have known several men in your predicament, who wore silver chains and a bunch of keys to their girdle," replied the stranger, eyeing the person of the Steward, and pausing on each of these articles as he mentioned it. "For myself, I am but a poor serving-man, and in no danger of promotion or corpulence, seeing that I am embarked with a master that is likely to be on the losing side, it seems."

The curious eyes of the Steward endeavoured to penetrate beneath the man's cloak, to discern what livery he wore. But it was cautiously drawn around him in a manner that defied the scrutiny of curiosity as experienced even as Shirley's.

"Heaven defend the right!" said Shirley, piously raising his eyes to

Heaven. "I mean not any respect of persons. Neither if it chance that my prayer make against thy master, hast thou any plea for offence thereupon, seeing I know neither his name nor title nor dignity, and so cannot be expected to judge on what he founds his pretensions."

"Pretensions! and who hath spoken of his pretensions?" demanded the traveller, suddenly turning full on Shirley.

"Nay, I mean thee no wrong," said the Steward in a gentle tone, endeavouring to disarm the rising choler of his guest; "from thy saying that thy master's was a losing cause, I naturally inferred that he made some pretensions to support it."

"Tush!" said the stranger impatiently; "if your trade lie in tracing every effect to its probable cause, it is

one of trouble enough to prevent that superabundance of corpulence, of the inconvenience of which you complained even now."

"Even so, unless the mind naturally inclineth thitherward, or is warped to that bent," replied the Steward, who piqued himself on his sagacious shrewdness, and who had penetration enough to assign the language and impatient tone of his guest to another character than that in which he appeared. "Methinks, mine honoured guest, and I would speak it without offence, that beneath that homely cloak of thine, is enfolded the person of a man of worship."

The stranger started hastily from his seat, and was approaching Shirley with an air of hostility which appeared somewhat redoubtable to our friend, the Seneschal. Then, as if crossed by some

sudden recollection, he paused, and, after a little hesitation, reseated himself.

"Whatsoever thou mayest think me," he said with apparent calmness, "I am but a poor serving-man, albeit I have been known to thy betters, and albeit my business lieth with thy lord even now. I would be glad that he would grant to me an audience forthwith; my business is pressing, and admits not of delay."

"If the noble Earl, my Lord of Arding, be apprised thereof, he will, doubtless, summon thee so soon as he can hear thy business," replied Shirley moodily; for he was somewhat moved to ire at the evident anxiety of the stranger to escape from his society.

"We will intrude on him no sooner," said the stranger; "I would that he might meditate a little on the possible urgency of my business with him. It

might move him to summon me to his presence more quickly."

"If thou hast any boon to ask," said the Steward, whose curiosity was now paramount to his displeasure, "I would just hint to thee, that I stand high in my Lord's favour."

"The boon I beg will require higher mediation, or it will require none," said the stranger, in a tone intended to check the importunate inquisitiveness of Shirley.

But the Steward was not so easily diverted from the pursuit of his game.

"Except in the matter of religious concernments, or in affairs of state, I think thou wilt hardly find any mediation more efficient with my Lord than my own," said he, persistingly.

"Master Steward, I thank thee for this tender of thy services, for so I understand it; and I would accept them, if haply I esteemed that it would be well

for me so to do," returned the stranger courteously, but firmly. "At the same time, thou must permit me to pursue my affairs in mine own way. My method may be odd, perchance, but I have been so accustomed to it, and have hitherto found it avail me so well, that I could think of parting with it no more than of turning my back on an old friend, who had made the journey of life in a line with me."

The Steward was now fairly silenced, and even the stranger himself could not await the summons of the Earl more impatiently than it was desired by Shirley. He found there was no reasonable hope of his obtaining any insight into the purport of the courier's mission, and he desired solitude, that he might be permitted to enjoy his evening's draught with tranquillity.

The anxiety of both was presently

terminated by the arrival of the expected message.

The stranger was ushered immediately into the presence of the Earl, who received him at his prayer, alone.

He threw off his cloak, and appeared a knight and a gentleman equipped for travelling.

"Right welcome here, and cordial be our greeting, Sir Henry Benningfield," said the Earl, advancing with outstretched hand to his guest. "We crave to know, what right happy chance hath procured for our poor abode the honour of your presence?"

"Not so happy, my Lord Earl," replied Sir Henry gravely; "little time have we to bestow on compliments and greetings; the royal stag is at bay, and would seek shelter in your forests, Lord of Arding! Be they well covered to receive him?"

"How mean you, Sir Henry Benningfield?" demanded the Earl fearfully, and his cheek became somewhat paler than ordinary. "We would very fain believe we misunderstand the purport of your message to us. Our services may be commanded, but we regret there should be need of them."

"Yea, and there *is* need, Lord of Arding!" returned Sir Henry warmly. "*She* needs your shelter, at whose command all doors should fly open; *she* prays your services, at whose beck all men should be! The crafty hound hath fairly hunted down the royal deer, and hath doubled and winded so artfully, that there was no escaping. You have delayed my hour of audience, and even now I should expect that our royal mistress is almost at your threshold. Shall your doors dutifully open to receive her, or will they close rebelliously

upon her, and drive her to seek shelter and security where both might have been less expected?"

"Our portals, hitherto, Sir Henry Benningfield, have never been closed against our legitimate sovereign, nor will they now," said the Earl proudly. "Our halls are not less capacious than when the Fifth Henry led the revel in them, or when the eighth of that name honoured them by a some day's sojourn. Neither are our hearts less duteous, nor our brows less open, nor our deeds more frequently done in darkness, that suspicion of treason should attach to us, even but the shadow of such a shade, Sir Knight."

"We crave your pardon, noble Earl, for our cautious speaking," returned Sir Henry. "In these times of trouble, we have difficulty in discerning between friends and enemies, and we distrust all

men, even those whose seeming is the fairest, and their bearing noblest. We are beset, Lord of Arding, and we will not willingly put our neck into the toils."

"The change is somewhat sudden, good Sir Henry," said the Earl, after a pause; "and yet it hath been in some sort expected, albeit scarcely in this guise."

"Of the nature of her grace's difficulties, our mistress wills, that you learn from herself," returned Sir Henry. "In truth, Lord Earl, her highness reposeth much confidence in the confirmed loyalty of your house, seeing that she hesitateth not to put her royal person in your keeping, even when you are known to live in terms of open amity and intercourse with them whom we dread as her most bitter and most puissant enemies; nay, if report lie

not, your heir is their hostage even now."

The cheek of the Earl became very pale.

"Even so it is," said he. "But we trust this circumstance will by no means disparage us with her grace, to whose person and cause we will prove our devotion, at whatsoever risk or peril to ourselves."

"This is well, Lord Earl, and it is such service as the daughter of Henry, and the sister of Edward hath a right to demand," said Sir Henry, with more warmth and greater friendliness than he had yet manifested. "Of our mistress's intentions she herself will inform you; but I may hint, for your better satisfaction, that, in matters of faith, she will choose that things remain on their present footing. Content you, therefore, on that head, and receive the intimation

she will graciously make of it, as one who expected no less from her highness."

"We will observe your counsel, Sir Henry," replied the Earl; "and now, if so please you, we will to the apartment of our Countess, who will receive tidings of the honour intended to our residence with the greater pleasure, inasmuch as the private religion of her grace accords with her own."

Sir Henry signified acquiescence, and having notified his intention to the Countess, the Earl conducted his guest to her presence.

The Countess stood to receive her visitors, and the dignity of her figure seemed well to befit that majesty she was called on to welcome. Sir Henry kissed the hand she presented to him, and he stood in silent admiration of the noble person before him, magnificent, even although in evident desolation.

"Ill would it befit me, Sir Henry Benningfield, to permit my Lord to demonstrate, in such a case as this, greater joy than myself," she said. "Truly, happiness hath long been a stranger to our bosom, and we scarcely know how to welcome the return of the long absent inmate. If, therefore, any vestige of our ordinary melancholy appear in our greeting of you, or in our testimony of duty to our Sovereign Lady, we pray you to believe our heart-felt joy in both not the less potent or sincere."

"You shall be obeyed in all things, Lady," returned Sir Henry. "And, alas! her grace cometh to you in such circumstance, that melancholy on your part will be placed by her to sorrow for the *cause* of her visit; we are in a perilous strait, Lady, and we will rely, in great measure, on the good service and assistance of the noble Earl of

Arding, that we may escape from the evil fortune that menaceth us."

"Such service the Earl of Arding will freely render," said the Countess, "for duty and for the right. May we not presume to inquire, of what nature are the perils that encompass her Highness, and in her, our most holy religion?"

"It is her Highness's pleasure that she herself inform you," returned Sir Henry Benningfield. "It were hardly necessary that I should lay open to you the crafty disposition and wily ambition of the proud noble who hath had, of late, so much the guidance of the young King Edward. And surely it were waste of words to speak of the intrigues which are agitated by him and his partizans to obtain that height, than which there is no earthly eminence higher, and of which the loyal subjects of this fair realm will not choose that the lawful heir be defrauded. And yet, the

traitor clad in the lion's hide is now rampant, whilst the princely monarch of the woods couches that he be not coiled."

"Woe to the times in which such deeds come to pass!" said Valerius, who had hitherto attended to the conference with silent earnestness. "Without are fightings, within are fears! Well may there be distractions and rumours of evil tidings in the land, when the chief of it is a wanderer, and craves that assistance she ought to command!"

"Holy Lord Abbot," said Sir Henry Benningfield, who had well known Valerius in his former proud situation, "we rejoice to have your pious eloquence enlisted in our cause! Her grace will have joy in receiving your benediction, and we will consider our success less dubious in that your prayers attend us."

"I reverence her grace's piety, Sir

Henry Benningfield; and if my prayers may avail aught with Heaven, success and prosperity will be multiplied upon her," returned the Confessor. "Heaven hath great rewards in store for her, inasmuch as to her will be committed the rebuilding of that church which vain and impious men essay to level with the dust. She protecting us, we will proceed with zeal to the maintenance of the truth; and the two-edged sword of our faith, whetted by her, shall pierce into the souls of unbelievers, and back-sliders, who have strayed from us; and they shall return again into those ways which are all pleasantness, into those paths which are all peace!"

"Nay, good Lord Abbot, your zeal hurries you into premature conclusions," said Sir Henry Benningfield, to whom the warmth of the Confessor seemed at once unseasonable and intemperate. "I have confided to the noble Earl of

Arding the moderation of her grace's sentiments in this matter; from thence, I think, she will not swerve."

The Confessor remained silent; but Sir Henry who was accustomed to consider the countenances of men as much a vehicle of thought as their speech, read, spite of the downcast eye, in that of Valerius, a mixture of doubt and exultation, which he knew it would avail not to remove.

"We have some affairs on our hands, which we should be glad to discharge before the arrival of her grace," said the Earl, who had listened to the latter part of the conference with extreme anxiety; "we will, therefore, crave your permission to depart for the present, and to leave you with our Countess, who will find much occupation for you in giving answers to those questions she will be glad to propose to you, touching the temper and condition of her Highness at

this time; how she bears the thwartings of untoward accidents, and with what hope she looks on the future. Joanna, attend well to Sir Henry Benningfield, and gather what it may like you to know, as quickly as may be; we hope the coming of her grace will shortly interrupt your conference."

"To leave me in such fair society requires nought of excuse, Lord Earl," said Sir Henry courteously. "I will endeavour, to my poor power, to satisfy your Lady in whatever particular she may choose to inquire, as far as I may, without disregard to the commands of my mistress."

CHAPTER XIV.

"Each petty hand
Can steer a ship becalmed; but he that will
Govern and carry her to her ends, must know
His tides, his currents; how to shift his sails;
What she will bear in foul, what in fair weather;
Where her springs are, her leaks, and how to stop
'em;
What sands, what shelves, what rocks do threaten
The forces and the natures of all winds, [her,
Gusts, storms, and tempests: when her keel
ploughs hell,
And deck knocks Heaven; then to manage her,
Becomes the name and office of a pilot."

Ben Jonson.

THE Earl paced the floor of his apartment with hasty steps, and eyes bent downwards. The character of his countenance was entirely changed; that

calmness which had so decidedly characterized him—that absence of earthly passions and feelings—was exchanged for agitation and anxiety. Lewen presently entered in obedience to his summons, and the Earl welcomed him with a look of eagerness.

"Come hither, Lewen, and listen to me," he said with the low rapidity of utterance which is frequently the characteristic of extreme anxiety; "I am in a perilous strait, and I seek thy counsel, albeit not willingly, but of necessity. Russell's most unfortunate absence has left me without counsellor or assistant, save I find both in thee. Would to God!—but to wish is now vain—the danger comes; it cannot be diverted, it must be met:—and how met? Aye, there's the point, good Lewen! *How* shall it be met?"

"If it please you, my Lord, to reveal the circumstances of the peril and the

point which it threatens, I might offer such counsel as my poor ability permits," replied Lewen respectfully.

"Of thy ability we have ample proof; of thy truth, not so much; for time only can afford that, and the period of our intercourse hath been but short," said the Earl with hesitation: then he added more decidedly—"albeit, I do think thee faithful—yea, true as well-tempered steel. Nevertheless, I am somewhat compulsively driven to repose a weighty confidence in thee; I must both unburden my spirit, and have counsel. Would to God that Russell had been here, for I am in a fearful extremity. And I would have sought aid of a friend! Shall I find that friend in thee? And wilt thou be faithful at any peril, Lewen?"

"Yea, my Lord, even to the death," returned Lewen with modest firmness.

"I must even accept thy word as

sufficient pledge, and if thou art honest, it *will* be sufficient, and if thou art not, what bond shall certify unto me for thee?" The Earl paused, and he traversed the room with augmented rapidity; then suddenly stopping directly in front of Lewen, he resumed, "Thou canst not but remember, that my daughter left the castle of her father but a few days since, that she might be present at the marriage of her friend and adopted sister, the Lady Jane Grey."

"More years must have elapsed than days have done, ere aught that relates to the Lady Blanche Evelyn can be forgotten by me," replied Lewen, and the interest he displayed was of a nature to conciliate the Earl, without alarming him by its warmth.

"That marriage took place forthwith," continued Lord Arding, "and trust me, Lewen, the auspices were most unhappy. Now, mark thou; the

knight, Sir Henry Benningfield, who is, at this present moment, with the Countess, comes on a mission requiring my instant service and assistance to the Lady Mary. Wherefore needs she them? Why, good Lewen, because the pious young King Edward, the hope of our country, is, as I think, gathered to his fathers. We all know the craft and perseverance with which the wily Duke of Northumberland has laboured to overcome the repugnance, which the King manifested to alter the order of succession, established by our late dread monarch, Henry the Eighth, and to procure the ratification of that alteration from Mountague and the Judges. Wherefore?—why the very cause lies open to all men! His son, the young Lord Guildford Dudley, marries the Lady Jane, the appointed heir to the crown of England. In the event of her succession, what could betide the sisters

of the king, recognized by a former parliament as his natural and legitimate successors, but persecution and distress? *Therefore*, the Lady Mary comes to the castle of Arding to seek assistance in men and arms, towards the recovery of her lawful right. And we will freely render both to her; our arm yet can wield a weapon in such a cause, and our voice can give the battle-word."

The Earl paused, and Lewen seized that opportunity to inquire, "whence, then, my Lord, originate the embarrassment and distress under which you suffer?"

"Because—mark me, Lewen,—because a conviction of right wars with a wish, that that right vested in another claimant; because justice is at variance with friendship; because allegiance threatens religion; and because, alas Lewen! because the happiness, it may be the safety, of my child, is involved in the

decision!" He paused; again traversed the apartment, and again stood opposite to Lewen—"Thou knowest, good Lewen, that Blanche Evelyn is the betrothed wife of the noble Lord Leighton;" the cheek of Lewen became pale, but the Earl perceived it not, and continued: "which side he may espouse in this quarrel for a throne, that must ensue, I know not—dare not trust myself to think. His zeal for religion will bring him to espouse the part of Northumberland; his affinity to Jane Grey will be a natural tie to bind him to her; his friendship with a Lady so amiable and so learned, will the more powerfully draw him to espouse her cause; and what will oppose such an union of motives? Nothing but a cold sense of justice and equity, which Northumberland will employ all the speciousness of sophistry to combat and destroy. Behold us, then, already bound as father

and son, armed against each other, and, hurried away by the violence of party spirit; opposing and thwarting each other to the utmost! Where, then, is Blanche? Divided by contending claims, how will her spirit be harassed! On the one side stand her lover, her husband, and her friend; on the other, her father. She will recognize Jane as her legitimate sovereign, because she will rejoice to see her on a throne, and because the warmth of her own inclinations will be misinterpreted by her, as a proof of the justice of the cause so pleasing to her, and as an earnest zeal after our religion. Neither will my personal pain, in co-operating with the friends and partizans of Mary against Jane, be trifling. I love that lady for her sweetness and humility; I admire her for the graces of her person and for those of her mind; for its extent, cultivation, and comprehensiveness; and,

above all, I reverence her for her piety of life, her purity of faith. Moreover, I have been united ever to her family by the bands of friendship and of far-off alliance. I am their debtor for the protection they have extended to Blanche Evelyn, for the rich graces of mind which they have infused into her, and for the manner in which they have altogether supplied to her the place of her own natural protectors. Thus, Lewen, have I disclosed to thee, the embarrassment which threatens me. I want the counsel of Russell in this emergence; and yet, methinks, my knowledge of his principles of action, will enable me to ascertain accurately what that counsel would be: Would he not say, 'What duty is owed to man that can be put in competition with the service due to a higher tribunal?' It is not the action stripped of all its dependencies that is to be considered, but

every consequence it may be supposed to involve, before we determine on the course to be pursued. Will not millions of souls, scarcely redeemed from error, be replunged into it by the fatal example of a misguided ruler?' And how" said the Earl, suddenly speaking again in his own person, "how can it be ascertained, that the moderate measures of Mary will not cease with the necessity that gave them birth? that the bigotry she displayed so early, and has continued to display so consistently until this present moment, will not rise again into action, on her accession to the supreme power?"

"Pardon me, my Lord, the boldness with which I shall speak to you, but which I must use, if I would deserve the confidence you are pleased to repose in me, and if I would display that integrity which is the only surety of my

fidelity to you," said Lewen, a sudden glow illuminating his countenance.

"Say on, good Lewen; for that thou shouldst speak with boldness and with candour, did I call thee to me," said the Earl, encouragingly.

"Then I would observe," replied Lewen, "that I well know, it cannot be spoken of with certainty, whether the Lady Mary will indeed retain that moderation which, at present, she affects; but is it not the duty of an honest man ever to suppose the best until the worst is proved?"

"Aye," interrupted the Earl, "that is sound morality, but very sorry policy, Lewen. If thou act on that principle in thy dealings with the men of this generation, thou wilt repent thee of thy simplicity very often in thy journey through life."

"So please you, my Lord, I would

never repent me of it," returned Lewen firmly; "I would console myself for the misfortunes which my mode of acting might bring upon me, by reflecting on my compliance with the scriptural injunction of charity, and by the satisfaction which a conscience, void of offence towards all men, would procure for me. Touching the point in question, my Lord, to depose a lawful sovereign may not be done by men; and to despoil the fatherless and orphans may not be attempted by those professing godliness."

"Aye, but, Lewen, men will not allow that they depose a *lawful* sovereign," returned the Earl; "they will not send their deeds naked into the world to be judged of by their very hue and shape. No—the very bitterest of Mary's enemies will varnish over their rebellion with a legal covering; they will do nought but under the sanction

of the law; and they will so distort that same law, that men will never recognize the visible lineaments which they originally perceived in it. They will plead Edward's will, as *the law* that sanctions Jane's claims, and nullifies those of Mary."

"Pardon me, my Lord, this cannot be to affect the case as applying to yourself," replied Lewen. "It concerns only those who, wilfully blind to the broad open path of truth, pursue those bye-roads and lanes which they affect to mistake for it. Your Lordship comes fairly to the question, resolved to see it as it is, and to act upon it as the very strictness of justice shall demand. But beware, good my Lord, that you suffer not private affections to warp the rectitude of your judgment in this high concernment. It is a hard matter to steer the vessel of justice clear of the shallows and rocks of interest; it is dif-

ficult to pursue a patriotism destructive of the ties of personal friendship. Public duty is often sacrificed to private feeling. But not thus with you, my Lord! You will feel that the right of this illustrious lady, recognized by a whole nation assembled in the senate to deliberate upon it, is indefeasible, and not to be set aside by the craftiness of an ambitious noble, or the yielding weakness of a dying youth. Trust me, my Lord, Russell himself would thus have spoken, for I believe him honest; or, if he had said otherwise, I mean not to disparage him, for he is a man of extreme zeal and learning, and withal much affectioned towards your Lordship; but *if* he had said otherwise, I would have pitied the strong prejudice that had thus blinded him to the truth, but I would have forgiven as an *error* what had been unpardonable as a sin."

Lewen paused, for, at this moment, a

tumult in the castle interrupted their parleying, and gave notice that the expected guest was approaching. Lewen walked towards the window. "My Lord," said he, "even now the cavalcade winds hitherward, and her grace will expect your Lordship's greeting."

The Earl, who had been wrapt in deep reverie since Lewen had ceased to speak on the right of Mary, immediately roused himself—shook off his irresolution, and called the faculties of his mind to instantaneous action.

CHAPTER XV.

"The *Queen* doth keep her revels here to-night;"—

"Oberon is passing fell and wrath,
Because that she, as her attendant, hath
A lovely boy stolen from an Indian King;
She never had so sweet a changeling:
And jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild."
Shakespeare.

THE lady, before whom the Earl now stood uncovered, might be judged to be about thirty-seven years of age; her person was not particularly distinguished for grace or beauty; but an air of melancholy, approaching almost to sternness, and of imperious pride, with some sparkles of that energy which was

a characteristic of the family of the Tudors, gave her an appearance which might have passed, amongst the vulgar and unpractized, for majesty of demeanor and dignity of carriage.

The Earl caught her stirrup, preparing to perform for her the duty of her master of horse.

"No, my Lord of Arding," said Mary, affecting to repel his services; "we cannot see you so demean yourself. We come to you a poor fugitive for shelter from pursuit, and you offer to us the respect due only to prosperous and ascertained royalty."

"In the hearts of your duteous subjects, madam, the latter point is already acknowledged; with them your royalty is indeed *ascertained*, and if their prayers and services *can* render it *prosperous* also, trust me, madam, I shall yet live to congratulate your High-

ness on your prosperity," replied the Earl, persisting in his offered service.

"We must, perforce, then, permit you to perform this unworthy office," said Mary evidently well pleased, and accepting the Earl's assistance in alighting. "We will crave your support, Lord of Arding, in entering your castle, which whether it should this night be our shelter or our prison we were dubious. But our good Sir Henry Benningfield was bondsman for your truth to us, and we hesitated not to accept such pledge."

"Sir Henry Benningfield did me right, madam," returned the Earl, giving to the steps of Mary that support she requested.

"The castle of my fathers has often ere now been fortified in defence of royalty; and it has dungeons, the walls of which are thick, and fetters, the links

of which are strong, for traitors. Other prison it hath not been, and whilst it owns a Lord of my blood and name, I think, madam, it shall not be."

"You speak nobly, Lord Earl, and we would that all our subjects were as true liege-men; but they are most rebellious!" said Mary, crossing the threshold.

She passed through the hall lined with such domestics and retainers as the care and anxiety of Shirley to apparel forth his Lord's magnificence in its best garb, could hastily collect. Every knee was bent; and the weapons of those who bore arms, were reversed, in homage to her, to whom their chief was offering the obedience of a subject.

"With a handful of such men as these," said Mary aloud, eyeing the retinue with evident marks of satisfaction as she passed along, "we would not despair of victory, even though our enemy

numbered them thrice over. Stout hearts and clean hands, Lord Earl, avail much in the day of battle, and are the auxiliars we are most anxious to enlist under our banner. His grace of Northumberland must be fain to seek others, for few such hearts or hands are in his pay."

A sensation of disgust was observed by the attentive Mary, to overspread the countenances of the Norfolk-men around her, as she mentioned that name so hateful to them, the name of Northumberland.

"His grace of Northumberland, madam, findeth so little grace amongst the Norfolk-men, that I deem he must be better witted than to choose such for his body-guard, or his main support," said the Earl, and quitting the hall, he conducted Mary to the saloon prepared for her reception.

There the Countess of Arding stood to greet her royal guest; she had doffed

her sables, and stood apparelled in her robe of state. Sir Henry Benningfield stood at her right hand, and he performed the office of master of the ceremonies, in introducing the subject to the Sovereign. Behind her, supporting her train, was Altham the Page, splendidly equipped, and, on her left hand, was Valerius.

The Countess would have bent the knee, but Mary permitted it not.

"Not so, my Lady hostess," she said, "we come to prove your hospitality, and we will not have too great a show of courtesy, when we must solicit boons. Were we not already apprized of the loyalty and ready service to our cause of the Earl of Arding, we would ask your gentle interference, Lady, deeming that then there was little risk of refusal."

"In such a cause, madam, all my power would have been exerted, were

there any necessity for such exertion, but I joy to find it otherwise!" said the Countess, casting on her Lord such a glance as recalled to him the time when many like it had been showered on him, brightening around him when all else was gloom, and shedding over every scene the halo of love and gladness.

"We likewise have joy that it *is* otherwise, Lady hostess," said Mary. "Sir Henry Benningfield, now that we have once breathed the air of confidence and loyalty at Arding, we release you from your surety, and accept our Earl as his own bondsman."

The Earl bent his knee, in acknowledgment of that gracious confidence for which so few of Mary's subjects were ever indebted to her.

"It becomes us now," said Mary, seating herself in the chair of state to which the Earl conducted her, "to account for our sudden journey and ap-

pearance here. 'Be it known to you, Lord Earl, that we received letters from those about the person of our royal brother and late Sovereign, advertising us of his sickness, and requesting us forthwith to set out on our journey towards London, to administer to him such comfort as our sisterly affection might afford. We presently addressed ourselves to do so in all haste, as our duty as a subject, and our kindness as so near a kinswoman, required at our hands. We journeyed so quick, that we were already within half a day's journey of the court, having reached Hoddesdon when we received from the Earl of Arundel, to whom we are ever bounden, an advertisement that our brother was already dead, and that the present concealment of his death was part of the plot of the Duke of Northumberland, who thought by this means to entrap our person, which, we doubt not,

would have been a considerable advancement to his traitorous designs. Upon this we retired with what speed we might, and journeyed towards our county of Norfolk, of the attachment of which to our person we were well assured."

"The men of Norfolk will prove that they deserve the trust your Highness has been pleased to repose in them," said the Earl. "But, madam, I speak by your grace's favour, we of this country are, for the most part, Protestants, and knowing the private opinion of your Highness on matters of conscience, we would be glad that you should certify to us, that we shall be permitted to pursue our modes of worship with all freedom, without let or molestation."

"Though our own conscience be staid, Lord Earl, in matters of religion," replied Mary, "yet we mean graciously not to compel or strain other people's consciences, otherwise than God shall,

as we trust, put in their hearts a persuasion of the truth. We would further advertise you, Lord of Arding, that by the pernicious counsels of Northumberland, and the weak compliance of those nobles who dreaded his grace's anger more than the wrath of God, that will doubtless show itself in punishment of their treason, letters-patent were signed by our late most dear brother, setting aside our claim to the succession, and nominating the Lady Jane Grey, the daughter of Suffolk, and the wife of Northumberland's young son, Guildford, to the throne. 'Wherefore we say, Lord Earl," continued Mary, "that they are liable to be attainted, and to suffer the pains of traitors, seeing they have attempted to deny our lawful right, established by act of parliament, which letters-patent had no power to invalidate."

"Even so, madam," returned the Earl, on whose cheek the paleness of

paternal anxiety was visible, "even so, madam, if it be your good pleasure, and if might for this once attend the right."

"Even so, madam," repeated Valerius coming a little forward; "and to your grace we look for the setting up again the ark of our holy religion, which hath been in the hands of the Philistines, but which may not now remain there."

"Holy Lord Abbot," said Mary descending from her seat, and bending before the Confessor, "we joy to meet you thus, and we pray to hear your benison pronounced over us."

The Confessor placed his hands on the head of Mary, and pronounced over her with a loud voice the benediction. The pride and the anticipated triumph of the ecclesiastic were visible in the elevated and radiant eye of Valerius, and he seemed immediately to resume those high functions of religious dignity, the

deprivation of which had been to him a source of so much irksomeness and discontent.

Mary arose, and again resumed her seat.

"Whilst we see on one hand our excellent Lord Abbot, and on the other our noble Earl of Arding," said Mary, glancing on each, as they stood on either side of her, "we feel ourselves strong indeed! Piety and valour are powerful bulwarks to the monarch. Neither will our court be without ornament whilst the fair presence of our lady hostess gilds it," she added, looking on the Countess. The eye of Mary paused on the Page.—"A goodly boy, and a lovely in sooth!" she exclaimed. "Of a truth, our noble hostess, were we in a condition to render our service one of honour and advancement, we would ask yet a boon of you, and be-

come a beggar for that pretty Page. Come forward, young sir, we would look on you nearer."

The Page, continually changing colour, obeyed with a trembling step, and knelt before her.

"How the boy blushes, even as a timid girl!" said Mary, examining his beautiful features. "If this head of thine were on the shoulders of a woman, it would be a dangerous visitant at a court, and cause the breaking of more lances than the best tilt ever run at the command of a monarch. Fear not, young Page," continued Mary, who observed the tremor and confusion of the boy with no dissatisfied eye, "we would promote thee, and when we ourselves have attained the height to which our birthright entitles us, we will advance thee, if so be that my Lady will permit, and that thou dost not object to change thy mistress."

"So please your grace, I hope next to serve a master, Madam," said the Page, still kneeling, and somewhat recovering from his timidity.

"And wherefore?" demanded Mary, who seemed to take pleasure in the boy. "Thinkest thou that their hands are more open, or their hearts more liberal? Thou wilt not find it so, and trust me thou hadst better content thyself with the offer I make thee, my Lady's permission always being supposed."

"Your Highness has failed of my reason," said the Page, with a glowing countenance. "It is not that I hope a hand more open, or a heart more liberal, that my longing is to serve next a master, Madam. I have not a sordid soul, neither, hitherto, have I lived amongst churls. It is, that I am growing somewhat too tall for this woman's life, and would have more manly occupation than dancing with my

Lady's gentlewomen, or shooting at a mark amongst the serving-men."

"An thy inclination be after more knightly sports, boy, we can fit thee," said Mary, smiling. "There will be gallant soldiers in our court—if once we can establish it—who will give thee a rougher taste of manly occupations than thou wilt like, perchance, such as may move thee to regret the days thou hast passed in dancing measures with the damsels of Arding. After all, boy, we shall win thee."

"Nay, Madam, by your grace's favour, I like not a woman's rule," returned the Page.

Mary's brow contracted, for her superstitious mind was accustomed to gather omens of good or bad promise from chance expressions, shot at random like this of Altham's.

"You are too forward, Philip," said Valerius, observing the effect produced

on Mary. "My Lady, the Countess, has so encouraged your vein of humour, that you know not how to check it. Learn, that there are moments when it must not be indulged, that there are presences when it becomes impertinent, and that this is such an one."

Altham lost his temporary glow of animation; he continued kneeling, and his cheek was pale, and his eyes were raised towards Mary with a look of supplication.

"Nay, reprove not the boy too harshly," said the Princess to Valerius, "neither be thou thus affected at our temporary gloom, of which, fair Page, thou wast not altogether the source. Thy words were somewhat ill-boding, and inspired us with a fear of the success of our cause; but it hath passed over, and we forget it. We are not the less disposed to employ thee in our service, when we can find for thee fit-

ting occupation. Wilt thou then be our servant, and thou shalt choose thy post?"

"Yea, Madam, I will be your subject, and my Master's servant."

"Thou wilt still have a Master! Why, hast thou not skill to regulate thyself, so that thou mayest require no other master than thy Sovereign?"

"An it like you, Madam, scarcely. I dare not trust myself too far. And if, at some moments, I am tempted to rely on my own discretion, your grace seeth how it stumbles with me; it might have served me a scurvy trick with your Highness even now, had it not been for the monition of the Father, which your grace hath witnessed that I deserved."

"By Mary, the boy's wit is keen!" said the Princess. "Well, then, thou shalt have a master, one of whom thou mayest have reason to be proud, even"

continued Mary, slightly blushing " our noble Earl of Devonshire. Say, boy, have we not chosen well for thee, and thinkest thou that thou canst pursue a worthier service?"

" Nay, Madam," answered the Page; " and yet, if I may speak under favour of your Highness, my ambition aims not so high; and, if it like your grace, I will altogether choose my own service."

" The Page is difficult!" said Mary, her brow contracting. " Perhaps, boy, thou hast doubt whether we shall ever possess the power of promoting thee as our will would."

" God forbid! Not so, by mine honour, Madam!" said Altham warmly.

" A knightly oath, and one that we may not doubt, youth!" said Mary, regaining her complacent aspect. " Our lady hostess possesseth here a sharp-witted attendant, and we would

crave of her to direct us how we may obtain such another, in all respects like unto this, except that he shall not be impatient of a woman's rule, and that he shall be willing to trust his preferment to us. And we will look to it, Madam, specially if his birth be noble, and grace our high favour."

"The inquiries of your Highness must be directed to our holy Father, to whom we owe our fair young Page," said the Countess.

"To our good Lord Abbot!" said Mary, with some surprise. "We think, that a flower like this can scarcely have been culled from the shade of a convent, Father!"

"Yet it was even so, Madam," replied Valerius, and his manner expressed a slight hesitation and embarrassment.

"We marvel much," said Mary, "but we may not doubt you, Father.

In sooth, 'tis a fair boy and a keen—one we should be well contented to possess, seeing that he is of our holy religion withal. We pray you, Lord of Arding," continued the Princess, turning towards the Earl, "misinterpret us not; we will choose our public servants, if by God's pleasure we redeem our kingdom from the hands into which it hath fallen, without respect to their faith, attending only to their ability and their fidelity to us. But so personal an attendant as our Page, it would like us well, should be of our own persuasion; albeit, we would by no means make that difference a ground of rejection."

The Earl bowed, but the perturbation of his brow was scarcely calmed by this explanation of Mary's.

And that of the Confessor was still more overcast; but its gloom was momentary; and when it disappeared,

traces of sinister joy and triumph were visible, which he in vain attempted to conceal under an affectation of calmness and submission.

"A Page altogether so fitted for our service, we scarcely hoped to find amongst our good subjects of Norfolk," continued Mary. "Thy refusal of our favour, youth, costs us more regret than thou deemest of; and we marvel, that thou dost not plead in excuse thy attachment to thy present mistress."

"So please you, Madam, I might well do it," replied the Page; "for, an I did not hope to exchange my Lady's service for that of a gallant gentleman whom I will choose, I would be well content to live and die in it."

"And by what name shall we learn to designate that favoured gentleman to whom thou wilt devote thyself?" demanded Mary.

"On that point, Madam, I would

crave your grace's permission to be altogether silent," replied Altham, holding down his head, and blushing very deeply.

"Thou art fit to take thy degree as a doctor of mystery, boy," said Mary, smiling. "We pray you, good Lord Abbot, that you reveal to us the parentage of this youth; it is a matter of which we must not crave information from himself; to request aught at his hands, is only to endanger refusal!"

The colour of Altham was steady, and the implied reproof disturbed him not.

"It pains me, Madam, to withhold any information which it is your grace's pleasure to seek," replied the Confessor, after a momentary pause of self-recollection; "but, in this case, I am compelled to silence by a Power I may not disobey."

Mary bowed her head.

"We submit ourself to you in this, as in all else, holy Father," she said; "and now rise, young sir. We have no more to ask, and will not draw again on thy pretty denials, thy '*So* '*please you, Madams!*' and, '*an it* '*like you, Madams!*' Rise; thou hast had long audience, and we have trifled away an hour on thee, which we could ill spare."

The Page rose reverently, and retired immediately behind the Countess. His cheek glowed with the crimson flush produced by the various emotions that had been elicited by his conference with Mary, and in his eye there was that "lurking devil," that seemed to discourse mockery and malice on all.

"We possess ourselves of your castle, good Lord Arding, as if already we were the acknowledged as well as the lawful Sovereign of these realms," said Mary. "If you permit us to exercise

our sovereignty here, we will that you and our lady hostess, together with our good Lord Abbot, be seated, or we dismiss our first court on the instant."

"The commands of your Highness are indisputable," said the Earl, and Mary was immediately obeyed.

"'We recollect," said Mary, looking around her,—" we recollect-- and our memory belied our hearty good will, or we should have remembered long ago, that there is one fair branch of your family, Lord Earl, whose welcome we would gladly have received, but which hath not yet been offered to us. We mean your Lady daughter, Lord of Arding."

"Permit me to recall what, doubtless, hath escaped your grace," said the Earl, and his heart trembled at this allusion to the subject on which all his fears hinged, "that Blanche Evelyn is altogether a stranger in her father's

house, and that her absence thence, at this moment, is less unusual than her presence had been."

"Aye, Madam, Blanche Evelyn is, in sad truth, altogether a stranger to our house and arms," repeated the Countess, in a tone of deep melancholy.

"This seemeth a subject of grief to you, our lady hostess," said Mary, "wherefore, then, doth the cause yet exist? And to whom, Lord Earl, do you consign so high a charge? Whose care do you, in so dear a relation, prefer to your own?"

"Madam," replied the Earl, "the truth may be somewhat offensive to your grace, which I deeply regret, and would therefore have concealed, but that your highness's questions extort it from me. I have, by no means, denied to your grace, that my faith is built upon another bulwark than the rock of Saint Peter, and that your

grace hath bound me to your service with triple bonds by your gracious assurances, that free exercise of conscience shall be permitted to all your subjects. Your Highness doubtless knoweth sufficiently the circumstances of my unhappy history, to be aware, that I am childless and heirless, except in the person of my daughter. For the better rendering her able to adorn the honours that will, at some period, belong to her, she was sent, in her infant years, to the mansion of the Duke of Suffolk, where she remains even now."

"We could scarcely expect homage from her who is, doubtless, rendering it to the usurper of our inheritance," said Mary morosely. "We thank your candour, Lord Earl, and for this we will not the more distrust you; at present, we desire to hold some private conference with our good knight of Benningfield."

The Earl and the others immediately withdrew, Mary remaining alone with Sir Henry Benningfield.

"What mummery is this which they are playing on us?" said the Princess, with imperious passion. "Do they take us for masquers and revellers, that they presume to dress up pageants and shows for their own amusement, and the better to deceive us?"

"What means your grace?" demanded Sir Henry Benningfield, surprised at this sudden ebullition of pride and anger, where all, apparently, had been so calm.

"What mean we?" demanded Mary, with increasing displeasure. "Nay, if thou art dull enough to see nought beneath the surface, we can but repeat the old proverb, none are so blind as the wilful."

"If it would please your grace to enlighten me," said Sir Henry submissively.

"Aye, Benningfield, it doth please us to communicate to thee all our doubts and our certainties," replied Mary moodily. "That Page—didst thou mark that Page, Sir Henry?"

"Yea, Madam, and methought your Grace did condescend too much by parleying with so saucy a varlet," replied Sir Henry.

"And dost thou think, Benningfield, that we could so stoop for my Lady Arding's favour, or my Lord Earl's service, as to concern ourselves after her Ladyship's Footboy?" demanded Mary haughtily. "Not so, good Knight. Now bethink thee of the beauty of that Page, the delicacy of his colours, and the womanly blushingness of his manner, and tell me, canst thou be so deluded as to think him aught *but* woman?"

"I marvel at your Grace's penetration," replied Sir Henry, after a pause of recollection. "Until my eyes were

as I may say, opened by your Highness, I thought not of searching in that matter beneath its appearance. But now I do remember me well of the excessive beauty and delicacy of the pretended Page, and I account for its feminine character even as it likes your Grace to think."

"Methinks, Sir Henry Benningfield, my Lord of Arding were but a sorry politician to attempt to play off such a game on us!" said Mary. "Now mark, Knight; didst thou not observe how we questioned the Lord Earl concerning his fair daughter, causing him thereby some embarrassment? And dost thou not perceive, that our mind was occupied by a suspicion of the identity of that Page, and the Lady Blanche Evelyn?"

"Yea, Madam, and the suspicion seemeth of probability," replied Sir Henry. "Yet wherefore hit the Lord

of Arding on such an expedient? One might marvel how it could avail him; what he could propose to gain thereby in the event of its success; and how he could delude himself by the slender hope that his project would escape the penetration of your Highness."

"And therefore do we doubt our good Lord Earl," said Mary, rising hastily," and therefore we will, that you, Sir Henry Benningfield, do instantly collect our retinue, and let us away from hence, before we are barred within the portals."

"Nay, good Madam, I do beseech your Grace to be advised," said Sir Henry soothingly.

"Stay us not, Sir Henry Benningfield," persisted Mary whose suspicions were now all roused to action, "we will depart forthwith."

"It may not be, Madam, and I pray your Grace but to listen to my reasons,"

said Sir Henry. He paused to allow Mary's reply or interruption, but she was silent. "If, indeed, the Lord of Arding be, as I can hardly suppose, false to your Highness and a traitor to his honour, it is all too late to think of escape. In the moment of crossing his threshold, Madam, your Grace became virtually his prisoner. Rouse him, and the rebel doth but show himself some short time sooner than he perchance intended. Doubt him, and your Grace disarms conscience of its sting: he hath but deceived where deception was expected and guarded against."

"Shall we then patiently submit to this mischance, and await quietly until it be the Lord Earl's good pleasure to declare to us which side he deems it politic to take, and what mode of action he hath determined to hold towards us?" demanded Mary hastily.

"By your Grace's favour, Madam,

trust me, I think that you judge too harshly of the Lord of Arding," said Sir Henry Benningfield. "I have pledged myself on his honour, and if it be your Highness's pleasure, I am willing to renew that pledge. I myself can testify for the willingness with which he proffered his services, to your Highness, and——"

"And," interrupted Mary, "do you mean to argue on that willingness as any proof of the sincerity of his loyal disposition towards us, Knight of Benningfield? Would it have been otherwise, if he were in actual preparation for setting in array his power against us? Sir Henry, we are caught in the toils, and if we sleep therein, at least it shall not be that we made no effort to escape from them."

"I have no more to urge, Madam," replied Sir Henry calmly, but in evident displeasure. "If your Grace find

cause of suspicion in that action which I had interpreted as the fulfilling of our best hopes, I confess that I am utterly incapable of judging. I resign myself, therefore, wholly to your Grace's direction, and, if it be your good pleasure to proceed onward, I will see that your Highness's retinue be instantly prepared."

Mary paused. Her suspicious nature, ever prone to consider the objectionable side of every action of those whom her gloomy bigotry taught her to doubt, was, at this time, vanquished by the necessity of a decision which involved her highest interests.

"Sir Henry Bedingfield," she said, "we have been somewhat hasty to adopt an unfavourable opinion of my Lord Earl, whose actions hitherto have not deserved it, and for whose fidelity to us thou hast pledged thyself. Cau-

tion, at such times, is not only allowable, but necessary, and if we have in this instance carried it to excess, that was owing to the unhappy circumstances of our situation rather than to our natural disposition. Misfortune is a sad changer of natures, Sir Henry; and that must plead our excuse with you and our good Lord Earl."

"Madam, your Grace's will shall ever be law with your subjects, save in matters which so deeply affect your own interests," replied Sir Henry, laying aside every symptom of his preceding displeasure. "The power of my Lord of Arding in this and the adjacent counties is so great, that it would be highly impolitic to permit him to ally himself with the other party more nearly than at present. Trust me, Madam, understanding, as he doth, the moderation of your Highness's sen-

timents in religious matters, he will not desert your standard, to the support of which he hath pledged himself."

Mary yielded to the arguments of the Knight of Benningfield, and she consented to remain for the present within the walls of Arding.

The right of Mary to the Crown of England in preference to that of Jane Grey, was speedily acknowledged in Norfolk. The inhabitants of this county entertained too keen a resentment of the slaughter made by the Duke of Northumberland of their countrymen, in the rebellion of the third year of King Edward the Sixth, to espouse heartily any cause of which he appeared a principal supporter; and Mary had the satisfaction of seeing numbers flock to her standard, headed by the principal nobles and gentlemen of the neighbourhood.

When she felt some security of

her right's being ably supported, she wrote to the Council, that "*She*
"*understood the King her brother was*
"*dead: which how sorrowful it was to*
"*her, God only knew, to whose will*
"*she did humbly submit her will.*
"*The provision of the Crown to her*
"*after his death was well-known to*
"*them all; but she thought it strange,*
"*that he being three days dead, she*
"*had not been advertized of it by*
"*them. She knew what consultations*
"*were against her, and what engage-*
"*ments they had entered into; but*
"*was willing to take all their doings*
"*in good part: and therefore did*
"*give pardon for all that was past*
"*to such as would accept of it, and*
"*required them to proclaim her title to*
"*the Crown in London.*"

An answer was presently sent to Mary, signed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and twenty other Nobles

and Knights, setting forth "That
"Queen Jane was now their So-
"vereign, according to the ancient
"laws of the land, and the late King's
"Letters-patent, to whom they were
"now bound by their allegiance. They
"told her that the marriage between
"her father and mother was dissolved
"by the Ecclesiastical Courts, accord-
"ing to the laws of God and of the
"land; that many noble Universities
"in Christendom had consented to it;
"that the sentence had been confirmed
"in Parliament, and she had been de-
"clared illegitimate and uninheritable
"to the Crown. They therefore re-
"quired her to give over her pretences,
"and not to disturb the Government:
"and promised that if she showed
"herself obedient, she should find them
"all ready to do her any service which
"in duty they could."

"You see, Lord Earl," said Mary,

presenting the letter of the Council to Lord Arding, "what sorry encouragement we gather hence. Nevertheless, we have good hope, that, God assisting us, we shall see my Lords of Northumberland, and Suffolk, of Winchester, and Northampton, setting their signature to papers of far more humble tenour. Albeit, in our present condition, we think it not advisable to abide here even under favour of your hospitality and hearty protection. Strong walls and stout hearts are good defences, but great numbers may prevail even against such. We will, therefore, set out forthwith to Suffolk, to our castle of Framlingham, whence, if sorely pressed, we can fly over to our royal cousin, the Emperor, at Flanders. We count on being protected by a levy of your followers, Lord Earl; and we trust to you the gathering of the rest."

"In all things, Madam, your Grace may repose on my fidelity," replied the Earl, and his loyalty was the more valuable, because he sacrificed to it the claims of friendship, and endured all the fears of a father for the safety of a beloved and only child, the means by which his name and honours were to be transmitted to posterity, and the hope of his declining years.

With a guard of such followers as the Earl could presently summon, in addition to those who had escorted her to the castle of Arding, Mary quitted Norfolk, and proceeded onwards towards the castle of Framlingham, openly expressing to Sir Henry Benningfield her conviction of the fidelity of her noble host, which nothing but the matter of the Page could have tempted her to suspect. "A matter," she added, "which even yet we will inquire into,

not suspecting aught to the dishonour of that faithful noble, but merely to satisfy our curiosity with regard to so great a mystery."

"I question not, Madam," replied Sir Henry, "but the holy Lord Abbot could satisfy you thereon better than my Lord of Arding. And I might surely have quieted all your Grace's doubts, by recalling to you that the Lady of Arding referred you to him for information concerning the boy."

"Thou art right," returned Mary, "and surely if aught in human form may be relied on, we may trust our lives securely to the Abbot Valerius. His zeal after our holy religion is in itself sufficient pledge for him. And I mind me well, that it was even as thou hast said. And if report belie not the domestic habits of the Earl of Arding, he and his Countess are little

likely to collude together in such matter, still less would the Abbot sanction their plottings."

"Even so, Madam," said Sir Henry. "And trust me, I think when, on some happier day, your Grace shall have leisure to search into this matter, it will be found to rest wholly with the Lord Abbot. Be it boy or girl who hath found means so much to interest your Highness, 'tis a creature of exquisite frame, and hath a grace that the aptest courtier might envy. Albeit, I marvelled that your Grace so well endured his flippancy of speech."

"We would hazard something to learn if the heir of Arding hath so fair a countenance," said Mary.

"I bethink me, Madam, to have seen her when a child, and her face bore sweet promise of future beauty," replied Sir Henry. "But if my memory serves me, I think I may certify to

your Highness, that it was of a character altogether differing from the beauty of the young Page, who is so happy as to be the subject of your Highness's meditation."

"Nay, Benningfield, but our thoughts are of weightier matters," returned Mary, and she proceeded instantly to the discussion of the nature of her hopes, and the friends and partisans on whose support she might calculate.

CHAPTER XVI.

" Something is rotten in the state of Denmark."

" The King's name is a tower of strength,
Which they upon the adverse faction want."
Shakspeare.

AT this time the Earl of Arding received several letters. The first from his daughter ran thus :—

" My Honoured Lord, and most dear Father ;—

" My love and duty being said, and the same offered to the Countess, my Lady Mother, if she will be pleased to accept them from her unoffending but

rejected child, I will straight inform you of the circumstances that have fallen out here, wherein, as in most human concerns, may be found matter of joy and sorrow; nevertheless, I think that joy aboundeth.

"Fame, as Virgil saith, is swift of foot, and the actions of the great are generally known as soon as performed. It will not need, therefore, that I relate unto you how that the nuptials of the Lady Jane and the Lord Guildford came to pass, even as had been resolved upon by their noble fathers, the Dukes of Northumberland and Suffolk. Nor boots it, that I detail the pomp and the pageantry that attended our revellings. Such things must be known to your Lordship, and I desire to fill my paper with higher matters.

"Of the death of the good King Edward, tidings doubtless have, by

this time, reached you. It pleased his Highness, having sagely reflected thereupon, and having taken the advice of his Honourable Council, to declare his cousin, the Lady Jane, successor to the Crown ;—a disposition at which all sincere Christians must heartily rejoice. For the accession of the Lady Mary would have perilled our religion even to the total overthrow of it, and the destruction of those truths which pious and pains-taking men have so laboured to establish. And to set aside her right was both lawful and permitted, seeing that by the sentence of the Universities, the marriage had between the King her father, and the Lady Katherine her mother, was by God's law incestuous, and the issue of it illegitimate. It were superfluous in me to enter into these particulars, which, doubtless, have been well considered by you. My ex-

cuse and reason for mentioning them here is, because the hearts and understandings of all men are occupied by them ; and although some persons see darkly by reason of prejudice, I do hope, for the honour of my kind, that the general sentiment partakes of the nature of my own.

"It seems that the Lady Mary is not satisfied with her late royal brother, King Edward's device for the succession, but hath written to the Council claiming to have her right acknowledged in pursuance of the act passed by Parliament in the latter years of the reign of her father, Henry the Eighth. Which the Council hath refused, being in no wise willing to contravene the Letters-patent to which their signatures were, for the greater part, affixed. And they have intimated the same to the Lady Mary, in their answer to

her letter, and proclaimed Queen Jane forthwith.

"The heart of her Majesty seemeth, by no means, elated with the glory and dignity she hath so suddenly attained. On the contrary, her spirit appeareth to be borne down by the weight of the Crown, and to bode heavily. I was present with her when her father, and her father-in-law saluted her as Queen. She was, at that time, much occupied by grief for the death of her so near kinsman, King Edward, whom, as your Lordship knoweth, she did heartily, and with all true and honourable affection, love for his own rare qualities and endowments, and also in grateful return for the friendship and esteem his Highness did always manifest towards her. Her knowledge of the state to which she had attained by his demise, did, by no means, diminish her grief for that event, but rather served to heighten it.

At first, she declined the dignity offered to her; she said, 'That by the laws of the realm and also by those of nature, the right of the King's two sisters was preferable to her own.' She declared, 'That the Crown was not coveted by her, and that it would be an intolerable burden on her conscience if she were to accept it, knowing that it belonged to them, and that she was enriched and adorned by the spoils of others.' It was represented to her that all was lawful, seeing that the Judges and the Counsellors in whom the interpretation and appliance of the laws lay, had sanctioned her right by setting their hands to it. But this hardly prevailed with her, until the Duke, her father, had recourse to urgent entreaty that she would overcome a resolution which, if persisted in, would put in peril our most holy religion, and pluck up by the foundations

that structure which was only just erected. The importunities of her husband, the young Lord Guildford, were still more difficult to be resisted; and, at length, her Grace was prevailed on to accept that Crown; which even now she declareth to me, is a burden and a fatigue to her that the honour of it cannot compensate.

"In such state are we at present, except that it is confidently reported, the Lady Mary is striving to raise the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk in rebellion. Her efforts will not, as we hope, avail her, neither shall she find many honourable men or righteous Christians eager to arm for her, or to destroy the peace of the kingdom, and plunge it into the turbulence and misery of a civil war, on a question which hath been already decided, and doubtless ought not to be again disputed.

"My dear Lord and Father, I come now to the chief purport of my letter, touching my betrothed lover and husband, the Lord Leighton.

"Since the death of his Highness, King Edward, his visits to me have been infrequent, and his manner, during their continuance, hurried and disturbed. How to interpret this I know not, but in one way, on the which I am not willing to think. I trust, my father, that he will be tempted to no deed which may cause me to repent of my trust in him, and love towards him,—a love which I am emboldened to acknowledge, in that it always met your gracious approbation, and had received your sanction, so that nought but the church was wanting to render me his lawful wife,—the which if those suspicions, to which I dare hardly give a form or shape, be confirmed, I think

will hardly happen ; albeit our arrangements to that end are forwardly advanced. In short, my Lord and Father, though God witnesseth for me, that my love for the Lord Leighton hath not weakened, but is even now as strong as when it affected me in a manner that awakened your kind fears after my bodily health, I will not wed a traitor, and such I shall hold that man, who will not espouse the quarrel of his lawful Sovereign, whom, before God and in my conscience, I believe the Lady Jane to be ; but will rather oppose her by fighting under the banner of a rebel and a sower of discord.

"My Lord and Father, the Lord Leighton will afford me no opportunity of declaring to him my sentiments, never seeking my presence, an avoidance of which my heart augurs ill. I entrust, therefore, the declaration of them

to you, and I pray you by your earliest convenience, to discharge you of the trust, and I rest, with all duty,

"Your obedient daughter,

"And affectionate servant,

"BLANCHE EVELYN."

The Earl read the letter with feelings of inexpressible bitterness. The worst he had feared, had come to pass; nay, more than the worst. He had taught himself to consider it as a natural consequence of the intimate intercourse between Blanche and the Lady Jane Grey, that the former should acknowledge with joy the claims of her friend and companion to the English Throne. But that she would enter thus warmly into a defence or justification of those rights,—that she would nominate *traitors* those who acted on a contrary opinion,—that her sentiments were strong enough to lead her to throw

off her love, and to refuse to fulfil her engagement with the husband to whom she was betrothed, and whom she had, hitherto, appeared to regard with so much tenderness, he had not calculated. The conviction burst on him in terror, and the shock shook his inmost soul.

"Would God that Russell were here!" he exclaimed; "and yet, wherefore that wish? Is he not with her, and would he not, of his own will, give her counsel according to his conscience whether or not it liked her to receive it? Either, then, she hath rejected his monition, or he may have advised the path she pursueth. He may reject all considerations, but those which affect the safety of our religion. He may acknowledge no claims, that may seem to interfere with the high vocation whereunto the ministers of God are called. I am indeed in a fearful

conjuncture. That union which it was the hope of my age to see accomplished, will be set aside by her, who will sacrifice her own happiness to her sense of the demands of friendship,—or the man whom it would be my pride to call son, will be opposed in arms to me—the father of his plighted wife. Such and no less are the consequences of intestine divisions;—happy the land that is not in such a case!"

Scarcely had this soliloquy proceeded from the mouth of the Earl, when he who was the principal object of it, was ushered into his presence.

The Earl sprung eagerly forward to embrace his future son-in-law.

"Leighton! welcome at all times, and thrice welcome, at this moment!" he cried. Then regarding the appearance of the young noble, he went on to question him. "Why, what hath happed to thee, man? Thou art wofully

cast down, even to utter abasement of visage! But cheer thee; for if the political wizards say true, we shall have fighting and tumults anon, which are seasons in which young gallants such as thou art, should thrive, and soar aloft even as new-fledged falcons."

Leighton sighed heavily, and threw himself on a seat.

"Aye, good my Lord," he said, "we shall indeed presently have fightings and tumults, and even thence ariseth my heaviness."

"Why, then, thou art altogether changed from the heart of mail which I have heretofore known thee," said the Earl, still affecting that jocularity, which is the last resort to those who have difficulty in restraining the appearance of their fears and distress in a perilous emergence. "Why, knowest thou not that a good Bilboa blade

cutteth in a trice the way to preferment, and compasseth it even while a plain man of peace is but addressing himself to set forth? Come, confess that it is not altogether the prospect of the wars that dismayeth thee, but something that lurketh behind."

"I may not gainsay you, my Lord," replied Leighton sorrowfully.

"Tell me in very truth," said the Earl suddenly throwing off the unquiet, gaiety of his manner; "have you seen Blanche Evelyn, and how stand you with her?"

"Even, my Lord, as one who hath lost all hope of favour,—who hath utterly offended her," replied Leighton, with a mortified countenance.

"So then! I begin to apprehend how matters stand betwixt you," said the Earl. "Blanche hath policy enough to be aware, that Jane will prove the

better mistress to her, and she would fain have you act as if you also thought it."

"Nay, my Lord, trust me, I judge not so harshly of Blanche's motives," replied the young Lord, who, with the feelings of a true lover, would permit to no man,—not even to the father of his mistress,—the privilege of condemning her. "True it is, she would very fain that I should bring my armed array to the standard of Jane, but her anxiety arises not from selfish motives, unless, indeed, the interest of personal friendship may be so denominated."

"I am charged with a message from Blanche to you, and I must see that I faithfully discharge me of the trust," said the Earl, and he presented to Leighton the letter of the Lady Blanche.

The young and noble lover, with

that aptitude to extract hope from every unexpected occurrence, so natural to an ardent and somewhat inexperienced mind, eagerly received the letter from the hand of the Earl, and his countenance brightened, and his eyes sparkled, as he did so.

But as he proceeded to develope its contents, the animation and eagerness of his manner evidently declined, and he appeared to read more slowly, as if reluctant to arrive at a termination which he already anticipated, and of which he augured ill.

"*Will not wed a traitor!*" repeated Lord Leighton, with some haughtiness, "My Lord, my Lord, understand you aught of this?"

"Yea, Leighton," replied the Earl calmly, allowing for the passion of the lover, by the consideration of his disappointed affection, "I understand well

those ebullitions of impatient youth and eager temper. They are violent, but they will evaporate the sooner."

"The love of Blanche Evelyn cannot tempt me, not even the love of Blanche!" said the young noble, who had been employed rather in reconsidering the two last paragraphs of the letter, than in attending to the reply of the Earl. Then returning it, he said, "I have had a conference with Blanche since that letter was written (to which, moreover, by lady's licence, no date is affixed), and I was referred to it for the exposition of her sentiments. From her altered manner to me, I came prepared in part for their tenor, though not, perhaps, for quite so much eagerness of disapprobation as may be inferred from the declaration that she '*will not wed a traitor?*' TRAITOR!" he repeated, and his face glowed as with rapid strides he traversed the apartment.

"The impatience of the girl strangely affects you, Leighton," said the Earl, smiling at his warmth of temper, "and, on that very account, you ought the more readily to forgive it. Is it necessary, that I should remind you of her early and continued friendship with the Lady Jane, of their mutual undeviating attachment? Think you, that Blanche is of a temper coolly to calculate on the bearings of the case? Prepossessed by a desire that the Lady Jane's right should be legitimate, will she not rather listen to every argument that may be adduced in support of it, and believe every reason that opposes it absurd or forged? Much as, in this particular instance, such a mode of action annoys you, you would have considered any other ungenerous. Policy and casuistry condemn her warmth, but love first pardons then admires it."

"I wish not to doubt you, my

Lord," replied Leighton, regaining his temper.

"And, moreover, prepossessed, as I before observed, by the strength of her own attachment to the Lady Jane, she considers your defection from her cause altogether the more unpardonable, by reason of the friendship heretofore existing between you and that Lady, and of the affinity which even now binds ye to each other," continued the Earl.

"Yea, my Lord, and on that subject I have had my own doubts and misgivings also," returned Leighton thoughtfully. "And not only on that subject, but on one of yet dearer and more important interest,—I mean that of our religion, my Lord,—I cannot forget the difficulties that have obstructed its arrival at the present point, and how precarious its existence will be, not if it lose the fanning of kingly favour, but if

it be checked, and opposed and plucked down by royal power. To assert and maintain the right of Jane would doubtless be expedient; would I could persuade my conscience that it were right also! Her grace the Lady Mary, gives fair promise at present; but sad experience, the facts of history, warn us how little faith is to be reposed in a Prince's promise! Neither, my Lord, do I augur well of the rectitude, or stability, or success of any faction, of which his grace of Northumberland is leader. Most men's hearts contain a book in which his misdeeds of ambition, craft, and cruelty, are indelibly engraved. Above all," continued Leighton, lowering his voice to a whisper, "the suspicious circumstances attendant on the death of the good and hopeful Prince Edward, have sunk deep into the minds of all, and have shadowed that Duke

of Northumberland with a cloud so black, that the graces and piety of the Lady Jane are altogether veiled by it."

"'Twere a deed too damned to have been attempted by man!" said the Earl with vehemence.

'Yea, my Lord," replied Leighton, "but not by his grace of Northumberland, aided by the devil, his patron saint. I came hither," he continued, after a pause, "somewhat doubtful of my reception, and suspicious that the sentiments of Blanche were also those of her father; and, perhaps, were prompted by him. I had scarcely, however, touched on the Norfolk borders, before I learned to correct my hasty judgment. Rumour, with its usual rapidity, had spread every where, that Mary had visited the castle of Arding, and had received the allegiance of its Lord."

"Even so," replied the Earl. "Her Grace proceeded hence to Suffolk, to the

castle of Framlingham, with a body of my retainers, and I expect daily to be summoned to her standard with the rest of them. The Earls of Bath and Sussex are raising forces even now, and many others, which promises that a numerous army will shortly be collected. My Lord, we shall presently to battle, with God for our hope, and conscience for our battle-word. We may give it with a bold heart, for we have sacrificed many ties, and much affection to it."

"Aye, much indeed!" repeated Lord Leighton, moodily, "and how we will be recompensed God only knoweth! If fair words stand for fair deeds, they will spring up thickly around the Queen. We peril much in this quarrel, and we may, perhaps, find, to our cost, that we must abide by its issue. And then what becomes of Blanche?"

"Suffer not your mind to dwell too

much on that subject," said the Earl. "For the present, at least, she is safe as if in her father's halls; and, if a Queen's promise *may* be trusted, she *will* be safe on any event. *Now*, Leighton, we have no time for reflection; we must be *doing*. Our boat is on the waters, our hand to it, and the current drifts it rapidly down the stream. We may not look back towards the shore, and we must bear us as we may, gathering some hope and satisfaction from the undaunted countenance of our pilot, conscience."

Leighton replied not. He acquiesced in the justice of the Earl's sentiments, but his heart permitted him not to pronounce that acquiescence. He had little reliance on Mary's word, and his hope of the security of his religion, in the event of her success in the approaching struggle, rested rather on a calculation of her fears hereafter, than

on her promises now. Moreover, the sudden and violent rending asunder of the ties of family and kindred, above all, of that similarity of sentiment, which had, hitherto, united him so closely to Blanche, pressed heavily upon him, and destroyed that buoyancy of spirit, which the bustle of action might be supposed to induce on a young and ardent mind.

CHAPTER XVII.

> "A parlous boy: Go to, you are too shrewd."
>
> *Shakespeare.*

ACCORDING to the then custom of English sovereigns on their first attaining the Crown, the Lady Jane Grey, attended by the Council, was conveyed to the Tower. This was one of those accidents in which chance acts the part of well-concerted design. The Duke of Northumberland, who had great reason to suspect the affection of the Council to himself, by that means detained them all as his prisoners, and so prevented their coalescence with the friends of

Mary, a measure to which subsequent events proved them well inclined.

Amongst other circumstances which were favourable to the cause of Mary, was the defection of Sir Edward Hastings, brother to the Earl of Huntingdon, who, having received a commission from the Council to make levies for the Lady Jane in Buckinghamshire, employed the powers with which he was invested, in the service of her rival, and thus added four thousand men to the army of Mary. A farther transfer of assistance originally designed for Jane was made to Mary, in the troops embarked on board a fleet sent by Northumberland to lie off the coast of Suffolk; a storm arose which drove them into Yarmouth, where they were engaged by the friends of Mary to declare for that Princess.

Jane's, or rather Northumberland's party now found it necessary to consider

to whom the command of their army was to be assigned. Northumberland, dreading the cabals of the courtiers, who, he knew, were allied to his faction rather by fear than by opinion or affection, desired to remain near the person of Jane, and to depute the command of the forces to the Duke of Suffolk. But the Counsellors, who were animated by a desire for Northumberland's absence, originating from precisely the same source as his own wish to remain near them, exaggerated to Jane the danger to which her father would be exposed on this service, and exalted the military capacity of Northumberland by which he had already gained reputation. Jane's filial tenderness brought her readily to co-operate with their plans, and Northumberland, who knew that the Duke of Suffolk was but a "*soft man*," opposed his own appointment to the generalship the less, because he began to think him-

self the only one able to encounter the present danger. Accordingly he departed, and such was the little zeal manifested by the people in his cause, that he is recorded to have said to Lord Grey, as he went along, "*Many come out to look at us, but I find not one who cries, God speed you!*"

When the Duke reached Saint Edmundsbury, he found that his army did not exceed six thousand men, and that Mary's amounted to double the number. Accordingly he wrote to the Council, desiring them to send him a reinforcement. They gladly availed themselves of this opportunity of escaping from the Tower, and hastily assembling in Baynard's Castle, a house of the Earl of Pembroke, they debated on the best means of shaking off the yoke Northumberland had imposed on them, and reconciling themselves to Mary. In pursuance of their resolutions, they

sent for the Lord Mayor, the Recorder, and Aldermen of London, and communicating to them their intentions, proceeded to Cheapside, and proclaimed Queen Mary, whence they went to Saint Paul's, where *Te Deum* was sung. The Duke of Suffolk was presently ordered to deliver up the Tower, and the Lady Jane to lay down the title of Queen, which she did without expressing "any sort of concern in losing that imaginary glory, which now had for nine days been rather a burden than any matter of joy to her."

The Duke of Northumberland was at Cambridge when he heard how decidedly the tide of popular favour ran against him. Perceiving that all was hopeless, without awaiting the orders of Council, he disbanded his forces, and ran to the Market-place proclaiming Queen Mary, throwing up his hat with every demonstration of extravagant joy.

The Earl of Arundel was sent to apprehend him, and it is said, that he had the abjectness and meanness to fall at the feet of his enemy and beg his favour. That mind which had been so insolent in prosperity, and tyrannous in its day of power, lost, in the winter of his fortune, all its energies, and weakened and prostrate, was subdued by fate, and compelled to yield without a struggle, without deserving the applause due to the dignity of silence and submission.

Mary, who had hitherto remained at Framlingham now prepared for her journey to London, to mount that throne which had, for a few days, seemed placed for ever out of her possession, but the way to which was now open to her without expense of blood.

Lord Leighton was with the Queen, anxiously attending her motions, and zealously offering his services, as much with the anxiety of a lover who hoped

thereby to secure the safety of his mistress, as with the loyalty of a subject zealous after the welfare of his Sovereign. He seemed to serve Mary, but he was devoted to Blanche; the apparent tendency of his actions was, to give a Sovereign to England; their real end was, to place his affianced wife beyond the reach of danger. So various and complicated are the motives of human actions, that scarcely ever do they result from one source; and that the ostensible one, but are the effect of several causes invisible to human ken, and not to be traced by human penetration.

Meanwhile the Earl of Arding remained at his castle, anxiously attending to every report of the progress of the opposite factions. At length, he heard from Lord Leighton, that the Lady Jane Grey, her father and husband were ordered to the Tower, but it was thought, that the Queen would not proceed

to extremities against them, but would begin her reign with clemency. Again, after the Queen's triumphal entry into London, he wrote, describing that event, and added, "I perceive with sorrow, that matters are likely to go harder with the Lady Jane, than at first I thought, or than the most bitter enemies of her house could wish. I fear me, that her confinement will be strict even to great rigour. This Queen hath not want of generosity, but she is melancholy and superstitious, and withal I think too like to be ruled by the counsel of men who wish not well to our religion, but would, by any means, be glad to encompass the destruction and overthrow of the same. Her grace's piety is altogether of a gloomy and narrow bigotry, which, as it seemeth to me, shall hardly promise fair tolerance to them of our belief. I think her highness would take well of you a journey to her

court, whereat she sometimes hinteth in a manner which seemeth to indicate, that if she will accept your presence there as a token of duty, she will put a harsh interpretation on your absence. On this hint, I would have you act, to which you will be the more readily moved, by my informing you, that I cannot, by any means, obtain knowledge of the residence of the Lady Blanche. I have been several times, either in my own person, or by that of my confidential followers, to those houses in which I thought it probable she might, for the present, abide; but no where can I hear tidings of her, far less can I see her. I need not enlarge on the grief this circumstance causeth to me, nor how much it would be lightened by your presence and participation."

The Earl saw, at once, the necessity of his departing towards London, and he addressed himself to make the neces-

sary preparations for his journey with the utmost dispatch.

It was his wish, that the Countess should accompany him, a measure which he deemed would be highly acceptable to Mary. He was debating with himself in what manner to propose it to her who had hitherto lived in such extreme seclusion, and who seemed so averse to the least interruption of the privacy she had chosen; when he was surprised by the entrance of the Father Valerius.

If the astonishment of the Earl at the unprecedented appearance of the Confessor in his private apartment, without any notice or request of audience, was great, it was not expressed by any discourtesy; and the visit of Valerius was, perhaps, received the more favourably, because it opened a ready and desirable path for communicating to the Countess, wishes which

he had so much reason to believe she would fulfil only by constraint, and with extreme reluctance.

The Confessor prefaced his statement by apologizing for an unwarrantable intrusion; the Earl denoted, by an impatient wave of the hand, his desire that the apology might be altogether omitted. Valerius then, in a more decided tone, proceeded with the message with which he was charged by the Countess. It comprehended a wish, on her part, that she might be permitted to accompany the Earl on his projected journey, attended by her Confessor and her Page.

She feared, Valerius said, that such a measure on her part would be by no means acceptable to the Earl, inasmuch as he had permitted her to obtain a knowledge of his own intention to proceed to London, only by the preparations which were making throughout the castle, whereof intima-

tion had been brought to her by her gentlewomen.

"So far," said the Earl, "was the apparent neglect from being intentional, that the communication has been delayed solely from our unwillingness to add more pain to the sufferings of our Countess (whence originating no one better than yourself, Father, can tell), because we by no means designed to proceed to London unaccompanied by her. We know that the Queen will the more graciously accept our offers of service and our pledge of duty, if our Countess add to their weight by her presence."

Valerius, who had especial reasons for wishing that the Earl should not discover by what means he had wrought on the Countess to resign so suddenly her long-cherished habits of seclusion, perceived how infinitely advantageous a delay would have been, by which the

proposition would have proceeded from the Earl himself. He had played the part of a man who, impatient to escape from an inclosure, has, with great hazard and pain, overleaped a dangerous boundary, and who, before he has well ascertained the safety of his footing, perceives a gate by which he might have passed through securely and easily.

"And by what arguments was the Countess of Arding induced to arrive at a conclusion so heartily to be desired?" demanded the Earl.

This was precisely the question which the Confessor had dreaded, but he had used well the short pause, and had prepared and collected himself to meet it.

"I was the person, my Lord, who so influenced her, and my reasons were purely spiritual," he replied.

The answer was definitive; the Earl, unsuspicious that any remoter cause

could lurk beneath the assigned one, received it with satisfaction, glad that he had arrived at a point with ease, which he had expected to attain only with great difficulty.

Lewen was an indispensable attendant on the Earl in his journey, and, perhaps, he, above all who *were* to attend him, most severely regretted his departure from Arding.

Each night had shaded his visits to the ruins, and had revived in his bosom the hope of again meeting his celestial visitant there. He had traversed the deserted walls amidst darkness and gloom, watching for the rising of that light more desired by him than the orient glory of the morning's sun by the Persian adorer, and deluded by the *ignes fatui* which fancy presented to his strained vision. Sometimes amidst that thick and undeviating darkness, he had imagined the pale, shadowy form

of Ignatius de Loyola, bursting through the barriers of the grave, and pronouncing in his ears those words at once delightful and appalling, which freed him from his vows to Heaven, and permitted him to bow before an earthly shrine, if, indeed, aught so bright as the brilliant being who had thus powerfully impressed his imagination, *was* of earth. He traversed the aisles where saints and hermits had trodden before him; he stood before the altar whereon the incense of devoted hearts had burned, now cold and quiet in the deep repose of the grave, whilst the free spirit offered up to the throne of the Most High, incense yet more pure. He stood there, and his thoughts, no longer taking that upward flight to which they had been trained and habituated, were bent earthward, were fixed on the incomprehensible but exquisitely beautiful woman, who had appeared to him

within those walls, in the midst of intense and delicious light, which now recurred to his fond imagination, as the halo arising from her divine beauty.

On the night preceding the day fixed for his departure from Arding, Lewen again wandered forth. The host of Heaven were pursuing their separate courses in prouder glory than Lewen recollected to have seen them on any previous occasion. A deep blue, like that of the ocean at night, gave effect to the luminous splendor of the bright worlds and suns that seemed to sail, like vessels of light, through the deep expanse of that supernal element. Lewen's meditations became of a more heavenly character than they had of late borne. It was impossible for him to view the matchless splendor of that beaming Heaven, without recalling the period when his visions had all been of immortality; when his imagination,

always powerful, had been checked in every other direction, and consequently rising, like a fountain, higher in this which it was permitted to take, had represented himself as a spiritual being, unincumbered by those members necessary to the motion of man, but permitting only a confined power of locomotion, and able to pass from world to world with wing as free and effort as delightful as that which blesses the happiest dreams of sleeping fancy. And then the contrast of *that* past with the present *now*, struck on him forcibly and fearfully; his vows were remembered, and the injunction of the visionary form of Ignatius de Loyola forgotten; his convent walls rose before his mind's eye; and those which stood before him, and were remembered by him only as the abode, perchance, of the being who occupied him, seemed to crumble into dust. His heart was perturbed,

and his reason embarrassed. He felt a necessity of decision, with only an indistinct glimmer of having a right to make it. His judgment had no power of action, for it was enthralled by passions that obscured it, and by wishes that biassed it, and destroyed the impartiality necessary to the investigation of truth.

In this condition was his mind, when he was recalled to remembrance of the active world around him by the approach of a human footstep.

For a moment he half expected to see *her* who was become so principal an object to him. That soft dewy light, the paleness of the moon-beams, the brightness of the Heaven above, and the deep shadow which enveloped those objects on which that moon's-rays rested not, struck him as presenting a forcible contrast to that splendid, unbroken brilliance in which

she had before appeared to him; and he thought, viewed in *such* a light, her beauty would become even more touching and tender, more *earthly*, more accordant to the perception of man. His eye turned downwards from the sky on which it had hitherto rested, and saw the radiant countenance of Philip Altham sparkling before him, his eyes scarcely less brilliant than the stars on which Lewen had been gazing, and appearing by that light of a far deeper hue than was usual to them by day.

"'Tis a glorious night in truth," said the Page, looking above and around him; "I marvel not that you prefer it to the garish splendor of day. And yet, considering the journey to be performed to-morrow, and the early hour at which we must be stirring, I should have imagined, Master Lewen, that

your couch had worn the more inviting appearance."

"What powerful motive then, brings thee from thine?" demanded Lewen, with that smile of which the Page so frequently beguiled him.

"What?—Come now—answer me fairly—if I shall say to thee, *love*—even *love*—wilt thou not gainsay me, and perhaps flout me for my youth?" demanded Altham.

"Nay, that will I not, good youth!" replied Lewen; "and yet, methinks, thou art surely somewhat young to prove the doubts and fears of that turbulent and destructive passion."

"By my halidame, thou art profoundly learned in it, Master Lewen, seeing that thou hast acquired no knowledge by experience, but art indebted solely to observation for thy skill in marking the signs and the qualities of

love," observed Altham, and in his smile "there lurked that still and dumb discoursive devil" of malice, which so often appeared there, to give poignancy and satire to remarks, that might otherwise have appeared the result of simplicity and unsophisticated nature.

"And how happens it, that thou art so well able to pronounce upon the extent of my skill? It is fair to suppose that time hath not aided thy proficiency," replied Lewen, recalling his ancient weapon of casuistry, that he might thereby ward off the Page's observation of his embarrassment.

"Aye, but to feel it deeply—even to the soul—amply supplies the lack of time," replied the Page with some emotion. Then suddenly starting off to a tone of wild glee, he added, "Come, I will hold thee any wager, that thou dost not discover for which of my Lady's gentlewomen I am wan-

dering here, albeit my eyelids every moment droop, and seem gently to remind me they would very fain close in the quiet of slumber."

"Thou wouldst be the gainer, of a surety," replied Lewen, "for my penetration is not able to discover thy secret."

"Secret? A secret, and in possession of a lady's babbling tire-woman?" said the Page scornfully; "the life that depended on such keeping, were worth but little, methinks. Wouldst *thou* entrust, to such a confidant, aught that concerned thee nearly? Nay, thou hast more discretion than to breathe thy love-tales even into the ear of a Page! And yet," he added with malicious archness—"perhaps, that Page knoweth of them as much as thyself, albeit in no wise indebted to thee for his knowledge! What sayest thou, Master Lewen?"

"I would say, as I have said often," replied Lewen, "that thou art altogether a mystery past my finding out. I remember me well of thy former allusions to circumstances, of which I suspected not that mortal understanding knew aught, save myself and one other—one only!"

"And who so happy as to be that favoured one, that shares the knowledge with thee?" demanded the Page keenly.

"I would that thou couldst furnish me with an answer to that question!" replied Lewen, speaking low and sorrowfully.

"I?" demanded the Page. "Thinkest thou that I am entrusted with so great a secret? or if I were," he added with a tone of triumph, "that I would reveal it to thee, whose confidence I am seeking, and to whom I would desire rather to give proof of ho-

nourable integrity than of so great weakness?"

"Thou hast well answered, boy!" said Lewen, with a look of approbation; "thou hast well answered, and I accept the reproof implied."

There was a pause. "Confess," said the Page, after hesitating a few moments, "that thou wast beguiled of thy rest this night by some thought of the sweet music piped by the spirits of the monks in yonder ruins, and that, on the account of that very melody, and other circumstances connected therewith, thou hast no pleasure in the prospect of thy journey to the gay city—the modern Babylon; or in any plan which may call thee hence, whilst thy matters stand in so uncertain and so impalpable a state?"

"To deny that of which thou art already so well, and to me so incomprehensibly, certified, were useless, even if

it were possible," replied Lewen. "It is even as thou sayest."

"And in return for thus much confidence," replied Altham with a kindling countenance, "learn from me what, save myself, none can tell you. The being whom you pursue, will not forsake you; she who has so painfully striven to touch that heart, will not despise it now gained. She who could rise on your view so unexpectedly in the midst of yon grey pile, will not find it impossible to meet you elsewhere, when least you deem of it. Lewen," he added with energy, placing his hand on the shoulder of his companion, "to thy couch, and gather what rest thou mayst, to prepare thee for thy morrow's journey. And believe, if for that woman thou art willing to sacrifice ancient habit and confirmed prejudice, thou art deserving of her, and thou wilt obtain her. Moreover, such is the

price she will demand for herself, and at less she is unattainable! No more! But homewards!"

The Page, taking advantage of an indecision originating in surprise, seized the arm of Lewen, and without speaking more, hurried him towards the castle.

CHAPTER XVIII.

> "How doth a rapid series of events
> The most disastrous, oh my dearest friends,
> This day invade us!" *Wodhull's Euripides.*

THE Earl was received by the Queen with those marks of gracious favour, which seemed at once the payment and the guerdon of the services and allegiance he had rendered to her in her day of darkness and doubt.

He found Mary surrounded by such men as Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, Tonstal and Bonner. With a heavy heart, he augured ill of the safety of those of his own communion, seeing that the supreme authority was

likely to be directed principally by these, the most bigotted adherents to the opposite modes of faith. And there was yet another circumstance which seemed still more ominous to the cause of the Reformation.

Edward the Sixth was buried on the eighth of August, and it was intended that his funeral rites should have been performed according to the ancient usage previous to the Reformation. Cranmer was the opposer of this measure, insisting that, as the King by his life and faith had been a strong supporter of the new religion, his memory should not be insulted, or the law broken, by celebrating his obsequies according to the Roman ritual, which he had always disavowed, and which was, moreover, contrary to that established by law. The better to carry this resolution into effect, he designed to perform the service himself, which

he did, and gave it a more solemn character, by adding to it a communion. But the Queen kept a solemn *exequie* on this day at the Tower, with all the masses and remembrances of the dead prescribed by the Roman ritual. Day, the restored Bishop of Chichester, preached a funeral sermon, in which he extolled the late King, but severely condemned his government, promising to the people a far happier state of things under the rule of the present Queen.

From all this the Earl of Arding augured ill, and desired the more anxiously to see the Lady Blanche Evelyn again under his own protection, and himself and his family sheltered within the walls of Arding. Not that his anxiety after his daughter amounted to absolute distress, for Russell was also absent and undis-

covered; and he felt, that where the one was, the other abode also.

Nor had the Earl great reason to fear the severity of Mary, even if Blanche were discovered in the most obnoxious situation possible; for the Queen's government was already becoming very unpopular. Her severity to the reformed preachers, and her partial favour to the Roman priests, exhibited by their restoration to the sees of which they had been deprived in the former reign, had irritated the minds of the people against her, and had rendered it sound policy in her to preserve the favour of those noblemen, who had assisted her in her attainment of the throne.

Lord Leighton's impatience and distress were by no means alleviated by these considerations. Viewing every danger that menaced Blanche, through

the exaggerating medium of love, he was not sufficiently awake to the policy which must dictate clemency from Mary to the heiress of Arding. He saw, with pain, the rigorous confinement that was inflicted on Jane Grey, and of which he daily dreaded a fatal termination. Above all, he began to feel a regret not unmingled with remorse, at his opposition to his beautiful and unfortunate kinswoman, whose greatest unhappiness had been a too easy pliancy of disposition, in that she had submitted to *receive* that crown, the right of another, which certainly she never attempted to *seize*. She was now expiating a crime, on her part involuntary,—that of possessing, for a few hours, the royal dignity,—by severe and unmitigated imprisonment,—doubly punished too in the person of her husband, by whom she was passionately loved, and who deserved that tender at-

tachment which she lavished on him. These feelings rendered the Court of Mary a scene of inquietude and bitterness to him. He saw, in the highest places and authority there, the bigots who reviled his religion and contemned the persons of its professor. He saw men of exemplary ability and piety displaced to make room for others infinitely inferior, and no cause assigned, no apology offered, but that they were *heretics*—condemned to excommunication from the pale of honour in this life, and from happiness and glory in the immortality to come. Such a scene was, in the highest degree, distasteful to the high and aspiring mind of Leighton. His faculties felt clouded and imprisoned beneath the stern monasticism of Mary's Court, and he sighed after the tranquillity and retirement of a domestic life, spent far from its sphere, in the society of Blanche Evelyn, until a more

auspicious juncture should summon him again, to add the weight of his talents either in the cabinet or the tent —in the day of council or of battle, as occasion might demand.

But there was one, whose anxiety after the recovery of Blanche far outstripped that of either her father or her lover.

The confidence of the Earl having once, by a sort of voluntary necessity, been yielded to Lewen, was not again withdrawn, but on the contrary, was increased upon him. He was employed on the mission of discovering the heiress of his Lord, and he pursued it with an avidity which, if success had depended on exertion, must have secured it. The intenseness of his anxiety was inexplicable to those who observed it, and might have excited the surprise of the Earl himself; but he being occupied by sentiments nearly

approaching to it, saw nothing unusual in so powerful a feeling, since the cause of it was ascertained.

At length these anxieties were happily terminated by the arrival of a letter to the Earl, which, though not from the Lady Blanche herself, as written by the hand of Russell, promised the most satisfactory information concerning her.

It stated, that on the Lady Jane's confinement, applications had been made from various quarters, that Blanche might be permitted to attend upon her in her captivity. This was peremptorily refused, and an order sent to Blanche to repair to the Court forthwith, and make the proper submissions to the Queen, and to the father whom she had so grievously offended by her pertinacious adherence to the person and interests of a ruined usurper. Overcome by unwillingness to such an

act at the present juncture, she had prayed the protection and assistance of the writer to aid her in concealment, and to sanction it by his presence. He, by no means unwilling to hazard every thing in the service of a Lady, whose zeal for the religion she professed and believed, was so evinced in practice and so illustrious in example, had consented, and they had procured lodgings in an obscure part of the metropolis in the neighbourhood of the Tower, where they had hitherto lived in security under the characters of father and daughter. At length, overwhelmed by fears for the Lady Jane, whose confinement daily became more rigorous; by the conviction that Lord Leighton had, indeed, deserted the cause of his friend and kinswoman, and had effectually served that of her enemy; by the knowledge that her own father, and family, withholden by no gratitude

for the past or pity for the present, were also devoted to Mary's party; she had sunk into an illness which, at first, had threatened fatally, but which was now nearly subdued by the joint efforts of youth and constitution. Finding all attempts to procure admittance to the Lady Jane abortive she was now anxious to be admitted again beneath her father's roof, which higher duties only had ever tempted her to forsake.

"Those who have aided the advancement of this Princess to the English throne," added Russell, "have doubtless, even already perceived, that they have sharpened the teeth of the lion to their own destruction. The building, the stones of which have been laid by so many pious men now in Heaven, or if on earth, in captivity and exile, shakes even to its base, and will fall forthwith. Be careful for yourself, my Lord, that its ruins do not crush those

who have armed with the thunder and lightning of power, the hand which lays that edifice prostrate. I shall never cease to regret, that the intentions of our late most pious Prince, of blessed memory, were frustrated by those who should have aided and enforced the fulfilment of them even to the death. The sins and iniquities of the land have risen to Heaven on the breath of offence, and they have drawn down this heavy vengeance upon us. In the day of the wrath of the Most High, where are the voices that should cry, 'Spare and pardon us?' They are silenced, or in far distant lands, remote from our complaints and our fears. My Lord, you and your friends have dug the pit for us, and its mouth gapes even for you also. A day of clouds and of thick darkness will presently overshadow the land, and its temples will be desolate or profaned by

idolaters. This is no vain prophecy, for the eyes of all men may, by this time, be opened to the danger that threatens us, and is of that magnitude whereof those who run may read. She who is imprisoned in a dungeon, was the best hope of true Christians, and they would have bowed down their necks that she might have trampled on them, if that were necessary to advance her progress to the throne. But her sun is gone down even before it was day; and the nation is shadowed by that eclipse. We mourn and lament, but we cannot save. The axe is already sharpened which is to hew down the stately cedar, under the branches of which nations might have been sheltered. And there is none to save, although the voices of millions denounce 'Woe, and woe, and woe!' to the whole earth."

The Earl participated in the anxious fears and gloomy forebodings of Rus-

sell, but he was too much occupied by individual interests at this moment, to resign his mind to general concerns. The prospect of the restoration of his daughter was one too joyful to be damped by any recollections that did not affect her personally. His regrets, as his joy, originated entirely with her. His *sorrow* was for her illness and unhappiness ; and his *anxiety*, that she should return to the retirement of Arding, and lose all her cares in the felicity of an union with Lord Leighton.

Blanche Evelyn, attended by Russell, arrived again under her father's roof,—but how changed, how altered !

She was considerably thinner, and had entirely lost the fine glow of complexion that had formerly characterized her. Neither did her skin retain its former transparent whiteness. It wore a more melancholy hue, as if faded by

sickness and sorrow. And her eye retained not its buoyancy of expression; it sunk downwards, and the full lid drooped over it. She was not so beautiful as before, but in the eyes of a lover more interesting, more dear, more touching.

Her heart, softened by sorrow and by separation from him, yielded itself entirely to the tenderness of its passion for Lord Leighton. Her anger and his defection from the cause of Jane, were forgotten in his present compassion for the imprisonment and probably severer punishment of that illustrious and beloved Lady; and in his somewhat smothered repentance, that he had ever been induced to espouse a cause against her. Blanche, with that exquisite penetration in the feelings of its object which love alone possesses, perceived this remorse, and clung the more fondly to him on account of it. She felt herself suddenly

restored to her habits of confidence in him, and she regained herself more quickly from this conviction.

One fear mingled with the recovery of his daughter in the mind of the Earl. He knew that Mary, who had been perfectly aware of the disappearance and concealment of Blanche, would presently be informed of her return, by those who used every exertion to the prejudice of the members of the Reformed Church. The appearance of Blanche at Court and her payment of homage to the Queen, would be expected; and, if not rendered, might exasperate the jealous mind of Mary to the utter forgetfulness of the debt she had previously contracted with the Earl. No arguments of safety or interest could induce Blanche to adopt this mode of conduct, whilst the fate of Jane Grey continued undetermined. She would not, she said, be betrayed into an act so

treacherous to friendship as one of homage to the triumphant enemy of her friend. Neither would she endure to carry [illegible]ssion and reverence in her countenance to one, whose heart might be, even at that moment, meditating the most repulsive cruelties against her too beautiful, too admired, and too beloved rival.

To the present retirement of Blanche Lord Leighton seemed to incline. And, as affairs at present stood, the Earl acquiesced in their decision.

CHAPTER XIX.

" And opportunity I here have had [thee
To try thee, sift thee, and confess have found
Proof against all temptation, as a rock
Of adamant, and as a centre, firm—"

———————" honors, riches, kingdoms, glory
Have been contemned." *Milton.*

THE Protestant members of Lord Arding's family were considerably agitated and alarmed by the frequent conferences which Valerius obtained of the Queen, and by the triumphant exultation of his manner towards them, when he accidently encountered them; for they knew, that his smiles, like

those of Satan, were called forth by mischief only. If it were possible to conceal the return of Blanche to her family, it was their desire to do so, until the moment should arrive, when she might enter the presence of the Queen without that excessive pain which the bare anticipation of such an event now occasioned to her; or when she might, with safety, retire entirely from the Court. But the favour Valerius enjoyed with Mary seemed to threaten a premature disclosure of Blanche's return; and the Earl felt, that it would be infinitely better and more politic to *reveal*, than *to be discovered.*

But the motives of Valerius were far hidden beyond the depth of human observation; and, perhaps, his own mind was more perplexed and agitated than that of any of the individuals, to whom he occasioned so much fear and annoyance.

All to which the plans of his previous life had tended, was now on the point of consummation and success, or of utter and irretrievable defeat and ruin. Neither did the issue depend on his own skill or perseverance. He was in the situation of a charioteer, who has guided the reins with unerring dexterity, and distanced every competitor; but who, by the conditions of the course, is obliged, when in sight of the goal, to entrust the guidance of his chariot to another, of whose ability he is hardly aware, on whose fidelity he is totally unable to rely, and of whose final intentions he is ignorant. Such and no less uncertain was the issue on which Valerius depended, and for the prosperous consummation of which, he was straining every nerve, and he contemplated no interests that bore not upon this absorbing one. His own reappointment to those ecclesiastical dignities of which he had

been deprived by Henry the Eighth, had become matter of less moment, not on account of its intrinsic value, but solely because he had habituated his mind to dwell on one point, until he had taught himself to regard it as the ultimatum of his objects and his hopes. He considered nothing equivalent to it, and consequently he hesitated at no sacrifice which might advance its attainment, because he knew that he must gain by the compromise.

At this time Lewen was summoned by the Confessor to prepare himself for an audience with Queen Mary, on matters of high moment.

It did not accord either with the general nature, or, in this instance, with the particular views of Valerius, to be explicit on the purport of this conference; and Lewen was left to torture his imagination with unavailing conjectures, on none of which he could repose with

confidence, and which he discarded as rapidly as they rose in succession in his mind.

Sometimes he imagined, that he was summoned to the presence of Mary on matters that related principally to his patron. Perhaps, she had already obtained some information concerning the return of the Lady Blanche, which she desired to hear confirmed by himself. Such a procedure, he confessed, would be utterly unworthy of the dignity of royalty; to tamper with the fidelity of a domestic was so repugnant to the principles and character of Lewen, that he was glad to believe he had failed of the cause of his summons. He had pressed Valerius on this point, but he had been able to obtain no satisfactory answer to his inquiries, and he addressed himself to meet the conference with such ability as would not disgrace the pupil of Ignatius, and such integrity as might not interfere

with the fidelity he owed to the Earl of Arding,—a fidelity to be preserved at all risks, when it interfered not with the interests of a higher tribunal. Sometimes Lewen's imagination suggested to him, that the appointed interview might bear some relation to the scenes in which he had acted so conspicuous a part in the ruins of the monastery. It might refer to *her*, the beautiful and benignant vision that had infused into his heart other raptures than those of devotion; it might refer to the absolution from his vows, which the voice of the spirit of Ignatius de Loyola had pronounced. Perhaps, probability was against this, but it is natural to the human heart to believe, that that circumstance which most powerfully impresses it, is also the most likely powerfully to impress others; and it can scarcely believe in the existence of events, entirely independent of itself. Moreover, Lewen's heart was

now strung to heroism. He saw the bright image of that female form as vividly as ever; he heard the tones of Ignatius as forcibly as before; but his conscience, and his ancient habits, and his confirmed hopes, had also raised their voices, and they *were* heard. Even now the struggle between the love of the man and the devotion of the ecclesiastic had commenced. What had before, to his dazzled imagination, promised only delight, now seemed fraught with temptation. He felt, as if these were the flames that were to play about the ordeal through which he must pass for his utter purifying from sin. Yet were there some moments in which earthly passion burned intensely, and threatened to consume the remnant of heavenly zeal. He was as the mariner on a plank; and on one side a wave dashes against him, and on the other a rock menaces him. With such feelings

he prepared himself for his conference with Queen Mary, and with doubts such as these he entered her palace.

He had received from Valerius the necessary passports to secure his admission to the Queen, and he found no difficulty in gaining her presence.

There were two Ladies with Mary when Lewen was admitted, but they withdrew on his entrance, although from the looks of interest and curiosity which they cast upon him, he doubted not that they were better informed of the cause of his summons there than himself.

Lewen's mind was cast in no common mould, and his intercourse had been with the chiefest of the earth, but he knelt not in that presence without embarrassment. It is in vain to argue and to convince the judgment, that Kings and Princes are but men, subject to all the vicissitudes of prosperity and

adversity, of health and sickness, of existence and death, which affect the meanest of their subjects; we feel, that they are sacred and superior beings, stamped with a mark that distinguishes them from us, and that inspires us with irrepressible awe before them. The proud man, and the philosopher, and the demagogue, may deny this in theory, but in the practice, themselves illustrate it. No man ever entered the presence of royalty, without feeling that there was a terror shielding THE KING, which penetrated to the innermost sanctuary of his heart. Lewen, in a supreme degree, illustrated the truth of this, as he remained before the Queen in his kneeling attitude, and bent his eyes to the earth in patient expectation of her commands.

The countenance of Mary was marked by more than its usual gloom, which might be attributed to the perplexities

that harassed her government and disturbed her councils. Never amiable, her expression was now characterised by an austerity that approached to sternness; and her melancholy, never tender, assimilated to the sadness of superstition, and the severity of a devotion better adapted to the convent than the throne.

She sat some moments in silent and strict scrutiny of Lewen. Her features somewhat softened as she did so, and her countenance gained a character more nearly approaching to gentleness—whether originating in sentiment, or assumed for the attainment of some particular end, can be inferred only from her general character and the conversation which followed.

At her command, Lewen arose, and her eye rested on him as he obeyed her, and remained stedfastly fixed on him when he stood before her.

"So far this is well!" said Mary; "we would not desire a fairer presence to adorn our court, even in the person of our first Earl! We would hold some conversation with you, young man; and if your time be not too precious to be so bestowed, we shall detain you with us for the present."

"No human concerns, Madam, can be of sufficient power to interfere with your Majesty's pleasure," replied Lewen raising his eyes, which, meeting those of Mary, were modestly, but without embarrassment withdrawn.

"You *say* well, and we will not doubt that you will also *act* well, when we shall demand the test of obedience," said Mary.

"May it please your Majesty," replied Lewen, who doubted whither all this might tend, "to command me to approve myself worthy of your grace's condescension, and I will so do, that I

trust I shall not falsify the high favour your highness is pleased to vouchsafe to me."

"This is well!" said Mary, whose aspect was gradually unbending to graciousness; "this is well, and we shall presently call you to the proof which you yourself have desired."

Lewen bowed low, but spoke not. Mary's eye was still fixed on him, and it evinced pleasure at the devotedness of his manner and words.

"We have heard your name, young Sir, and we pray you now to repeat it to us," said the Queen.

Lewen hesitated, and a deep colour flushed his cheek. Then he answered with embarrassed rapidity,

"William Lewen, Madam, may it please your Grace."

"No, young man, in sooth it doth *not* please us," replied Mary, smiling, and directing on him that imperious look

so natural to her family, which seemed of power to enforce the obedience it commanded, " we will hear from your own lips another name of higher distinction and of nobler sound, and we will have you appropriate it. We may not be trifled with, Sir," continued Mary in a tone of yet more absolute command, as she perceived that Lewen hesitated yet.

"Your Highness hath well divined, Madam, that such name I *might* appropriate; but I trust that your Majesty will hold me excused, when I affirm, that the season of my divulging it hath not yet arrived," replied Lewen, and his dignified firmness was tempered by his submissive manner.

" Yea, but it *hath* arrived, and we must not be gainsaid," returned Mary, retaining her smile, but at the same time not lowering her tone of imperious command. " We will hear from your-

self that name which seemeth to be as unpronounceable as if a spell of mischief lurked in it. And yet, we would wager somewhat, that that name is of fair report, and not unknown in courts or camps."

Lewen remained silent for a few seconds, and his looks and attitude pleaded for forbearance; but Mary met them with a countenance that bespoke her resolution fixed, and her purpose immoveable.

Lewen again knelt at her feet: His face was very pale, and he covered it with his hands.

"If such *be* your pleasure, Madam," he said with a low voice, and breathing very deeply, "he who kneels before you, bears the name of Raymond Evelyn!"

"Raymond Evelyn, Lord of Oransey, and the heir of Arding!" said Mary, and she rose from her seat as she

spoke. "We thank you for your confidence, noble Sir, and although somewhat compulsive, we will teach ourself to value it as highly as if it had been voluntary. I thank you also, young Lord, in that you allow me to congratulate myself on the acquisition of so proper a courtier. Truly, Raymond Evelyn, thy gallant bearing will cut a conspicuous figure in our circle of noble Knights and beautiful Dames. And see thou, that thy choice fall worthily. Many a lure will be holden out to the heir of Arding, with which William Lewen had not been tempted. But be not thou entrapped by their baits, seeing that tinsel will glitter even more than the solid gold. We trust much to thy discernment, and we will not have thee discredit our judgment. Henceforth, we will call thee entirely our own, and we will love thee the more in that thou hast been educated in the bosom of our

holy mother church, after the very straitest manner of our communion. Yea, even for that shalt thou be very near to our person, and admitted to the innermost sanctuary of our council-hall, Lord of Oransey. What honours and power the hand of the Sovereign can lavish on a subject who hath deserved well of her, and who needs but to show himself in his proper light to gain the applauses of all men, shall decorate thee, who, in our eyes, seemest to possess double honour, first, in the splendor of thy ancestry and the distinction of thy name, and next by the conviction that our own hand tore away the veil that hath hitherto enveloped you, and thus, it seemeth to us, as if from us you derived some part of your splendor, at once a noble by the favour of our ancestors to your family aforetime, and, as we are well pleased to believe, one of our own creation also."

"I am unworthy of the high honour which your grace would confer on me, and I shall but disgrace your Highness's favour," replied Lewen, or rather Raymond Evelyn, gravely.

"We honour our own judgment more than to think thus, young lord," replied Mary, "and we will not have you belié our penetration."

"In sad truth, Madam, my education hath been such as hath fitted me for a far narrower sphere than a court, one of more quiet, and one in which a man may walk more safely without so much difficulty," said Lewen.

"We will not have thee by any means impeach our discernment," persisted the Queen. "We are determined on enrolling thee amongst our courtiers, and we will give thee an office that shall not permit thee to be inactive, or to believe thyself an unworthy member of the society into which

thou art thrown, by being an useless one."

"By your Majesty's favour, my office hath already been assigned to me, and my vocation lieth elsewhere," said Raymond Evelyn firmly.

"Nay, but they who had the disposal of the fate of the obscure William Lewen, must not by any manner of means pretend to control that of Raymond Evelyn of Oransey, and the heir of an English Earldom," returned the Queen. "Neither will we allow that they are to be placed in competition with us, who have, perchance, as much skill to develope your mind so as to ascertain for what occupation nature has fitted you, as could be possessed by them; and, withal, more ability to recompense merit. Altogether, young lord, we are not used to denial when we proffer favour, and we will not be contented to receive it from you. Mary

Tudor is not accustomed to supplicate, and to do so now would sit but awkwardly upon us. And yet we were loath to impose command on one whose obedience, it seems, would be most unwillingly rendered."

These last words were spoken with an imperious manner, and altered demeanor. All that impatience of opposition which characterized the family of Tudor, shone in Mary's eye, and were indicated by her gesture. Raymond Evelyn perceived the precipice upon the edge of which he stood, and he hesitated not to advance to the very brink of it in that cause for which he perilled himself.

The more those obstacles which threatened to prevent the fulfilment of his vows, multiplied, the more sacred and inviolable did they appear to him. The more dazzling his prospects of worldly aggrandizement became, the

more anxious he was to sacrifice them on that altar, to which he had devoted himself. All those passions of his mind which had been confirmed and strengthened by culture and habit, and which had been subdued by the force of newer, and more natural, if not more powerful, passions, now revived in renovated strength and vigour. All the devotee glowed in his breast. His thoughts recurred to their former channel, and rushed along the more vehemently, for their previous diversion from it. A glorious army of saints and martyrs seemed to hover over his head, and to point out to him that path by which they invited him to follow them. The vista that opened to his mental view, shone with the radiance of those beings who had already tracked it, and whom he contemplated as the invisible guardians of his progress through it; nay, whom the enthusiast hoped to behold

and converse with even whilst yet his own soul was clad in its veil of flesh. He beheld his manhood spent in the most devout exercises of that religion to which he should make, a sacrifice great as mortal man had made, or could ever make, save that of resigning a throne for a monastic pallet,—followed by the applauses, the veneration, almost the worship of mankind whilst yet he abode amongst them. Then he beheld himself in the sacred seat of venerable eld, perhaps distinguished in the conclave, perhaps advanced to the supreme ecclesiastical power, the most potent, and absolute, and extensive, throne in the world. Raymond Evelyn felt, that no *lay* dreams of ambition could offer to him views so dazzling as these, and he deluded himself by the belief, that he was sacrificing all things on the altar of devotion, when in reality he was only feeding with them the flame that was

to produce a richer ore than he could obtain elsewhere.

In fact, ambition and devotion were, by nature and habit, so blended in the mind of the youth who now kneeled at the feet of Queen Mary, that they could not exist separately; and because she understood not the construction of his mind, she had not the power to touch that secret spring, which would have opened its portals, and secured her the triumph she sought.

Raymond Evelyn's imagination had presented to him this vision of successful hope, in the pause that followed the somewhat angry speech of the Queen; and it nerved him with fresh courage to pursue that contest or controversy,—a triumph in which he regarded as the first step that would lead to the realization of his ultimate ends.

"Madam," said Evelyn, still retaining his former modesty, but exhibiting

more manly firmness, "to refuse aught that your Highness might please to request, would be difficult, and to disobey your commands impossible to your faithful servant, save when they interfere with the duty he owes to a yet higher tribunal."

"How?" said Mary, and her brow lowered. "What higher tribunal than that of his legitimate prince, doth a subject of England acknowledge in our presence? We know but of one, young Sir, and we think that our commands will not interfere with the service due to that, we mean the court of the King of kings, Lord of Oransey!"

"And even to that, Madam, did my speech allude," replied Raymond Evelyn, gravely.

"Yea, and if even so, is your duty to me incompatible with that you owe to Heaven?" demanded Mary in displeasure. "Do you take our court for

that of Pharaoh, in which you expect to find all the plagues that devoured his land? or think you, like Nebuchadnezzar, we will set up a golden image, and require you, on pain of death, to fall down and worship it? or that, like the Mede, we will permit you to offer no petition to God or man, save to ourself, on peril of the den of lions? Or that our court is the Babylon on which the wrath of Heaven will exhaust itself? In sooth, young Raymond Evelyn, you judge somewhat harshly of us, and we will scarcely essay farther parley with you, if our grace procure for us such sorry return."

"Great is my misfortune that I am not, in all respects, able to obey the least wish your Highness would deign to intimate to me, Madam," replied Evelyn, and his countenance belied not his words." "Is your Highness, who seemeth in all other respects so well

informed of what concerneth me, ignorant that I am *professed*, yea bound by vows, to know no other master but my God, and to serve him with all my soul and with all my strength, utterly resigning all temporal advantages at his footstool?"

The cheek of Mary turned pale, and the frown of imperious displeasure that had furrowed her brow, gave way to the habitual contraction of superstition and melancholy.

"And even in that respect, Lord of Oransey, we knew your situation full well," she replied, in a more moderate tone, "but we were led to believe, that our most holy father would grant a dispensation of those vows to our prayer."

"Yea, Madam, and fully do I acknowledge the power of his holiness to grant such dispensation," returned Evelyn; "but how if conscience maketh protest against it? how if the

soul feel, that its vocation lieth in the absolute fulfilment and observance of those vows which the lips have pronounced? To the altar of God I am bound with a bond that nought can loosen but death. The first ideas that impressed themselves on my infantine mind, were received there; the hopes of my youth pointed thitherward; and the inclinations of my manhood have confirmed them. Oppose not, Madam, your command to impressions and feelings strong and indelible as these are. Let not your grace thwart inclinations that were, doubtless, given by Heaven itself, and that may, peradventure, with all humility I speak it, be necessary to the salvation of a world!"

The brow of the young enthusiast expanded as he spoke; his eye sparkled, and a brilliant colour mounted up to his temples. Mary observed him attentively, and, to her superstitious mind,

it appeared the radiance and effulgence of inspiration.

With an unsteady voice,—for she seemed to herself as one who opposed the visible and plainly indicated pleasure of the Divinity,—the Queen had recourse to the last expedient that could be essayed.

"Raymond Evelyn," she said, "tell me truly, was there no time in which these vows seemed less binding on your conscience than now?—when the prospect of being absolved from them was less repugnant to inclination; and when, therefore, the monition of conscience was made in a still, small voice, and but little attended to?"

The glow of Evelyn's complexion subsided, and his eye lost the fire that had been kindled in it. His look was fixed on the earth, and he remained silent, pale, and agitated. Mary smiled internally as she witnessed the effect her

question had produced, and she awaited his answer with impatience.

Gradually Evelyn collected himself, and he regained a calmness which, if less brilliant than his former animation, was quite distinct from the disturbance that had just before so visibly affected him.

"I may not deny to you, Madam," he said with grave solemnity, "that there have been moments when the wily enemy of mankind hath assailed me by the allurements of earthly passion. Aye, Madam, and once he had nearly drawn his prey into the net he had spread out. But, doubtless, there is a God that watcheth over his own, and guardeth his flock. Madam, I have been tempted, and have been nigh to fall, therefore am I armed with the greater strength to resist temptation now. Come it in what shape it may, whether arrayed in the beauty of the

living, or the terrors of the dead,—whether it assail me in the entreaty of an empassioned woman, or the command of a sovereign, it is detected, and therefore, may not be yielded to. Madam, the sacrifice is already great; and knoweth not your Highness, that the honours you offer, and I reject, are but garlands that adorn the victim, rendering it more meet for the offering?"

Mary replied not, but her silence was preserved without a vestige of anger. With a courteous inclination of the body, she presently retired, and a page entering in a few minutes, conducted Lewen from the palace.

CHAPTER XX.

"For valour, is not love a Hercules,
Still climbing trees in the Hesperides?
Subtle as Sphinx; as sweet, and musical,
As bright Apollo's lute, strung with his hair;
And, when love speaks, the voice of all the gods
Makes Heaven drowsy with the harmony."

Shakespeare.

THE Confessor returned from the first audience he obtained of Queen Mary after her interview with Raymond Evelyn (who still continued to be known as William Lewen) and which occurred within three days after that event, with a perturbation of mind that communicated itself to his countenance, his gesture, and his whole appearance,

In proportion as he had calculated on the result of this interview, as securing the success of his projects, his disappointment at its unexpected issue was great. Contemplating man in one general view, his arrangements had been constructed with skill, and promised ultimate success. Religion had been made to seem to approve and dictate that line of conduct which she alone opposed; woman's agency had been employed to inspire that passion which is generally sufficient to subdue obstacles otherwise invincible; the passion had been inspired, and had led the victim to the very brink of the precipice before he perceived his danger, or desired to guard against it;—a Queen had promised and commanded;—devotional zeal, passionate attachment, loyalty and ambition, had, by turns, tempted and been foiled. So many engines, so powerful and well directed, had scarcely

failed, but that the fort against which their battery was plied, had a means of defence on which the assailant had not calculated.

The governing principle of Lewen's mind was ambition, a passion which religion had not checked, but which was entirely ranged beneath its banners. His soul had become purely *ecclesiastical*, and his hopes, his wishes, his pursuits, were all cast in the same mould, obeying the impulse of this dominant feeling. He had suffered a momentary excitement in another direction, by the powerful impression made on him by the unexpected and almost visionary appearance of a woman, whose exquisite beauty must have kindled admiration and astonishment in any situation, and could not fail of exciting both in the dramatic arrangement of her first appearance. But this impression had gradually faded; she had appeared

but once, and he had since quitted the scene most favourable to the revival and continuance of the feelings she had called into action. To permit him any repose of mind, must be fatal to the preservation of new passions but just induced, since it was almost infallibly certain, that his passions would resume their usual channel, and his powers of judgment perform their habitual functions.

All this was now perceived by Valerius, and he had only to wonder at and lament the inadvertence *into which* he had been betrayed. But he also resolved to repair it as speedily and with what skill he might, convinced that the interests of his church would be more materially benefitted by William Lewen's assuming that place in active life to which he was by birth entitled, than by his attainment of a crosier, or the keys of Saint Peter.

He was pacing his apartment with the rapid and disordered steps of one whose mind is restless and unquiet, when Philip Altham entered.

Valerius paused in the midst of his progress, and contemplated the Page with a fixed glance of steady scrutiny. A slight hectic passed over the cheek and temple of the boy, but the suffusion seemed the result rather of emotions of curiosity and inquiry than of confusion and embarrassment.

"Even now I was thinking to send for thee," said the Confessor; "I have much to communicate, much to counsel, much to instruct."

"And I am willing to be counselled and instructed, and to act thereupon, Father!" said the Page earnestly. Then, after a moment's hesitation, he asked, "Hast thou aught to communicate concerning *him*—concerning Lewen, my Father?"

"Yea, for of him only would I counsel thee, foolish child!" replied the Confessor, smiling at the embarrassed eagerness of the boy, and it was not a smile of derision or contempt. "In sooth, thou must no longer value thy skill in acquiring the hearts and affections of mankind, seeing that, in this particular, thou art altogether foiled, and Lewen scorns thee."

The cheek of that Page turned deadly pale; his lip quivered, his eye distended and sparkled, and his voice was hoarse with emotion, as he said with vehemence, but in a low deep voice, "my Father, he may not scorn me, and live!"

The Confessor looked full on the frenzied countenance of Altham, and his mind, all powerful as it was, trembled at the contemplation of the fiend he had raised.

"Thou wouldst not *murder*, boy!"

said Valerius, in accents as deep as those of the Page himself.

Altham seemed recalled to himself by this question. The unnatural agitation of his countenance subsided, and his features regained their usual delicacy of form and colouring. "Why hardly, Father," he replied in a tone almost of levity, "save on some desperate emergence, on the arrival of which we cannot calculate, and surely, therefore, we cannot prepare a proper deportment to meet it."

"But there is no emergence which may excuse or palliate so black, so fatal a crime; fatal, boy, not only to the victim, but the sacrificer!" said Valerius earnestly. "Knowest thou not, or hast thou forgotten, that from the beginning even unto this present, blood has been required in atonement for blood? The manslayer must be slain by man,

and the law will avenge the murdered on his murderer."

"But," said the boy quickly, "is there no way to prevent the law, Father? And doth not every legend tell, that they, of our kind, cannot live under the scorn of those they love? And wot you not, that they who *are* scorned, avenge them of the scorner, and then take vengeance *upon* themselves *for* him, my Father? Aye, let him scorn and die for it; afterwards to die for him were very little!"

The Confessor looked on the boy with alarmed and bitter feelings. "In what school and under what instructors, hast thou acquired these desperate feelings, most unhappy child?" he demanded at length.

"Nature was my school, and the passions were my masters," replied the Page with a proud smile. "Had I not skilful teachers, Father? and could they

fail of moulding their pupil even to what form they would, seeing that no opposing influence aimed at counteracting their efforts? did not circumstance, and time, and occasion aid them in the fulfilment of their task? And yourself, Father, are *you* wholly blameless in this matter, if it be one of blame? Did *you* bring no assistance to them? Did *you* never excite imagination, and, drawing me out of the quiet path for which my birth seemed to have fitted me, occupy my mind with ambitious aspirings, and render it meet for the reception of the dominant passion?—Ah me! Well have you called me most unhappy!" added the boy, clasping his hands, and looking sorrowfully on the ground.

"These reproaches come well from thy lips, who art indebted to me for thy very being!" said the Confessor sternly.

"A boon for which, in sooth, I am

most grateful; so grateful, indeed, that I would thou hadst repaid thyself by resuming thy gift even in the first moment of my possessing it," replied Altham bitterly.

"Thou art querulous, and, like a peevish child, thou turnest away from a bauble thou hast coveted, because thou canst not obtain it on what terms thou wilt," said the Confessor with contempt.

Altham met his sneer, and returned it with one even more bitter, and not unmingled with defiance. "Is it to be obtained at any rate and have I not yet paid a fitting price for it?" he demanded keenly. "Have I scrupled at aught that might ensure my possession of it? Why am I here now? why am I in this most unseemly garb? why have I, during so many tedious months, lived a life of entire deception? why have I endured the contumely and haughty con-

descension of the great, and, which is tenfold more intolerable, the familiarity and equal intercourse of the little? why have I stooped to appear before *him* in another character than my true one? why have I humbled myself to ensnare his fancy, to delude his imagination, to subdue his judgment, when my own inclination prompted me to rest my chance of success, the very completion of my hopes, on his feelings, on his heart? Aye, to have touched that—that alone,—that entirely,—ought to have been my incessant occupation, and trust me I would never have wearied in it! I would have pursued it continually; I would have wrought in that pursuit by day; by night, my dreams should have dwelt on it,—should have afforded instruction for the future—perchance should have given me a prophetic foresight of it! And wherefore did I not thus? wherefore did I incline myself to the in-

tricacy and the maze you wove out for me, seeing that my spirit would have darted right onwards, and would have chosen rather to be scorched to annihilation by the fiery heat of the sun into which it had plunged itself, than have crept along amidst the secure darkness of the night? Father, at your will I bowed down: at your bidding I thus humiliated myself. You wrought on my hopes and fears with masterly skill, until you compelled me to resign myself implicitly to your guidance! If all my pain terminate in defeat, shall I not well pronounce the hour in which I surrendered myself up to you, evil and accursed? And, when such a termination threatens me, have I not some claim to be querulous, and to say, '*This was your work, my Father!*'"

The eye of Valerius was fixed on the countenance of Altham, which became crimsoned by those feelings that occa-

sioned his rapid utterance, and poured forth themselves in a torrent of eloquent gesture and expression which shook the soul of the Confessor. As the sparkle in the eye of the Page became fiercer, his own sunk; as the colour deepened on the boy's cheek, his own became pale; as Altham's speech and action became more vehement, his own powers of articulation and gesture seemed to fail him; and when the Page had ceased, Valerius paused long before he could reply.

"To retort the reproaches thou hast so vehemently lavished on me, were unworthy of my character, and would ill display the affection I have for thee, and the anxiety after thy welfare and advancement which occupies me," he said in his peculiar tone of soothing and calmness. "Neither were it wise to waste these moments in ineffectual controversy, which may be so much

more advantageously devoted to action. Else I might well set in array against thee thy froward spirit, thy imperious disregard of control, thy continual deviations from the track I have pointed out to thee! Recall thy own confessions; remember thee of the numerous occasions in which thy inadvertence had betrayed all which it was most essential to thy success to conceal, but that the total absence of suspicion in *his* mind, preserved thee from falling headlong into the abyss which thou hadst prepared for thyself, and to the very precipitous brink of which, thou wast continually advancing."

"What call you this enumeration of my errors, Father," demanded Altham impatiently, "but a throwing back of my reproach upon myself? I care not for the act, but I am not to be imposed on by any disclaiming of it, when thus convinced of its reality. In a word,

Father, our transgressions may have been mutual, but surely mine are the more excusable, seeing that they originated in a desire to exert that disposition of candor so natural to my youth. Whilst *yours!*" The Page paused abruptly, but the eloquent disdain of his smile amply supplied the sentence.

"Whilst *mine*, thou wouldst say," returned the Confessor calmly, "were the result of cold calculation, and systematic deception! Be it so, and mark how well such a reproach comes from thee! For whom have I calculated, for whom have I plotted deception? For my own aggrandizement? nay, for thou knowest the most absolute success would in no wise have benefitted me. For whom then? For Lewen? ask thy own heart, and I abide by its answer! Methinks, I can even now hear its voice pronouncing the decisive *nay*, and adding, *for thyself—for thyself was*

all this undertaken and persisted in! Surely, then, I merit other recompense from thee, than this which thou givest. And wherefore are we now disputing thus? Is our failure certain? Is *thy* chance of subduing *him* the less, because no other power could effect it? I think not; and I well understand, that, in the event of success, this gall of reproach would be exchanged for the honied words of gratitude and joy."

"Be it so, Father!" said the youth, slightly smiling, but by no means less impatient. "And now let us attain to the very pith of that matter on which we are debating. What hath been done? and what remains to do?"

"Every effort to divert the mind of Lewen from its resolution of utter abandonment of that world in which riches, and honours, and love, await him, and which they will conspire to render blessed,

had been made, and unavailingly," returned the Confessor, whose countenance harmonized with the detail of that disappointment of which he was speaking. "*I* have argued, *a Queen* has supplicated, tempted, and commanded, without obtaining any other fruit than that of confirming a resolution, which he conceives himself the rather bound to maintain, since in all the engines that are employed to subvert it, he believes he can detect the weapons of Satan, striving to vanquish and allure him. But there have been, he confesses, there have been, moments when that resolution was well nigh vanquished. Canst thou divine when those moments were?"

The Page darted a searching glance on the countenance of Valerius, which was presently exchanged for one of hope and anticipated triumph.

"Quick, quick—Father!" he exclaimed impatiently; "I die with desire to know *when*?"

"Even at midnight—even in the ruins of the monastery of De-la-pray—even at the feet of the fair and beautiful woman who appeared to him there, as the goddess of our element of light," replied Valerius, with a countenance that partook in a less degree of the radiant hope which shone in the eye of the Page.

"Even so? and is it even so?" demanded Altham, and the violent palpitation of his heart was visible in the agitation of his form.

"Even thus, and now say is there cause for reproach or despair?" inquired Valerius.

The brilliant eye of Altham returned a more expressive answer than his tongue could have pronounced.

"And now what remains to be done, —what is now to be acted ?" he asked.

"Dull child!" said the Confessor, but smiling kindly whilst he pronounced the words of reproof. "Canst thou not divine? Is that weapon which *almost* ensured success before, less potent now? When all others have failed, shall we not have recourse to this? Aye, even this night that beautiful being must again appear to him."

"Even this night, Father?" repeated the Page, and the glow of hope that had just before illuminated his cheek, was now succeeded by the paleness of anxiety.

"Aye, even this night!" returned Valerius. "Wouldst thou not have it so? Wouldst delay? Were it not better to ensure success rather than to hope it? Were it not better to prove total defeat than to fear it?"

"Aye, even so!" replied the Page with moody calmness. "No torture can surpass this suspense. And if defeated, *if* scorned, even then we shall find a remedy, even then invention will not be exhausted, my Father."

"Surely not," returned Valerius; "and yet future hope will hardly be so strong as this. But prepare for the trial, and expect the happiest issue."

"Father, you shall be obeyed. The hour is almost come, when I attain superabundance of felicity, or when I sink into nothing!" said the boy, and his eyes were bent on the earth.

"Where is that elasticity of spirit which raises thee higher after defeat?" demanded the Confessor. "Despair not, even though foiled. Future effort, if more difficult, may not be unavailing."

"*May* not! the *future!*—after this night, will there be a *future* for me?"

As he spoke thus, Altham quitted the apartment. The eye of Valerius rested on his receding form with an expression of intense anxiety, and even after the boy had disappeared, he stood immoveable, his glance fastened on that spot where the Page had vanished.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice; then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely, but too well;
Of one, not easily jealous, but, being wrought,
Perplexed in the extreme." *Shakespeare.*

IT was yet scarcely past the hour of noon, when the Page entered the apartment of Lewen.

Lewen was alone, absorbed in deep meditation. On whatever subject his mind might have dwelt, the traces it had left on his countenance were those of lofty calmness and dignified courage. With such an expression a votary might pronounce the vows that severed him for ever from earthly ties; indicating, at

once, a conviction of the extent of the sacrifice to be made, and a holy joy at the grandeur of it, because it the better expressed his profound devotion and entire surrendering up of himself.

"What ho, there?" said the Page blithely. "Always immersed in studious thought, always engaged in solving problems of that most mysterious and complicated machine, the human heart? No hour out of the weary twenty-four, thrown away, with delicious prodigality, on the revel, or the light trifling that whiles away so many of mine! Continually watching the hour-glass, and envious if the least grain of sand falls out unobserved! Why, thou art the very slave of time, and altogether leadest a life to which utter nothingness were infinitely preferable."

"It is to be hoped that thy ideas on this matter will speedily change," replied Lewen gravely; "that thou wilt

learn to value the periods devoted to contemplation of thyself, and to communion with thy own heart, as those most consonant to the dignity of man, when by reflection he is convinced of his existence and his divine origin."

"I question, if ever my taste will aspire to so sublime a height," said Altham, with a laugh that equivocated between mirth and derision.

"Yea, when a few years, perchance months, have rolled on in their course, and thou shalt have passed them with me, whose convert thou art," replied Lewen.

"*Thy* convert!" exlaimed the Page. "Aye, and I *am* thy convert, but perchance in a way thou wottest not of. Pass months, perhaps years with thee! —Oh, then, indeed, thou wilt prove thy words sooth, for what thou wouldst have

me, even that shall I be ! To live with thee—commune with thee—occupy thy thoughts—engross thy affections—be permitted to love thee—surely this were worth a strong effort !—And when shall such wished-for union arrive ?"

"Very shortly," replied Lewen, and he looked kindly on that young Page ; "very shortly will the period of our union commence, and the doors of our quiet abode will open to close on us again and for ever !"

"Well hast thou spoken !" said the boy vehemently, "and perchance with more of the spirit of prophecy than thou wottest of ! Yea, and very shortly indeed shall our union commence ; and whether our abode shall be the palace of the proud noble, or that quiet and still and impenetrable home of which thou hast spoken, even thou thyself must

determine; but the hour of decision hath not yet arrived, albeit it advanceth quickly."

Lewen's eye was fixed on the perturbed countenance of the Page.

"My meaning was very plain, although it pleaseth thee to interpret it as if it were a parable,—a dark saying," he replied. "In sooth, it sometimes seemeth to me, that thou likest to indulge in a reverie of which, in thy speech, thou communicatest somewhat to others."

"Perchance, thou art right," said the Page, regaining his wonted levity. "And such moments come upon me more frequently than they whilome did. At Arding now, there was my friend Shirley, our excellent Steward,—a sort of panacea to divert the spleen in whatever shape it might attack one. 'Tis a pity that so useful an animal, and withal so harmless, should be con-

demned to pass his time drowsily in the country, when we could find so beneficial a post for him here. His very dulness was the cause of as much mirth as his impotent anger, or his pretended wit. I should have missed a wiser man much less. But thou who art amused at nought,—who despisest trifles,—and wouldst rather moralize on the devious flight of the brilliant insect that swims down the sun-beam, than admire the variety and splendor of its hues,—I will wager that thou hast no care for the absence of Shirley, and findest no lack of his society."

"Thou sayest truly," replied Lewen; "I believe the good old man will find more happiness in that abode, in which he hath passed so many years, than in a strange land; and I wish him heartily to enjoy it."

"I admire thy benevolence!" said the Page, curling his lip. "Come,

confess that thou hast abundant reason for approving his residence at Arding, and one of which thou dost not choose to speak."

"What meanest thou?" demanded Lewen calmly, meeting the laughing eye of the Page with a steady glance of inquiry.

"Of a surety thou actest bravely, and if I were not wise beyond all power of man to dupe me in an affair of this sort, I avow that I should be staggered," said Altham. "And thou wouldst have me believe, that thou hast not chosen yon old dotard for thy love-counsellor, and hast not appointed him to watch in thy stead at the accustomed hour, if, perchance, he may hear that witching strain which, if my memory serves, so bewildered thee. Albeit, it must swell to a pitch somewhat louder than is accordant with that melancholy grace, which I should deem

most agreeable to thy solemn humour, before it reach the ear of our good Steward, on which Nature bestowed no great quickness, and which, of a certainty, age hath not rendered more acute."

Lewen became pale as Altham conjured up the memory of the past. "Cease further to urge me on this subject," he said, after a pause, "I would that it may remain in oblivion for ever! It is a circumstance on which my mind may not—and desires not—to dwell."

"What?" said Altham quickly, turning full on Lewen—"Art thou of that fickle humour to disregard presently what thy soul has, but a few short days since, doted on? Methinks, I see thee now, craving of me with all the melancholy anxiety of a lover, news of thy incomprehensible mistress; and now, behold thou art altogether so

changed, as to wish that the remembrance of these things be erased from the tablets of thy brain, for aye! 'Tis a most lamentable inconsistency, and pulls down to the very ground all the admiration and favour I bestowed on thy sober humour, which rested chiefly on the wonderful regularity I fancied in it."

"Calculate not on undeviating consistency in the mind of man," replied Lewen; "neither estimate any virtue so highly as to believe that it will never fall,—that it has no moments of weakness,—none in which it desires to stoop to gather the flowers that spring up in the broad path,—the colours of which are so bright, and their fragrance so tempting, but the juice of which is poison and gall."

"And such a flower thou hast proved the fair woman whom once thy heart loved!" said the Page, and his

colour rapidly varied from pale to burning crimson.

"Yea, for she hath tempted me to forget the covenant I have made with my God!" said Lewen. "Yea, for her allurements had well nigh ensnared my soul to utter perdition, blinding my eyes to the dangers of the path I was treading, and lulling to sleep the conscience that might otherwise have warned me. I am dedicated to the services of the temple, and I may in no wise apostatize from it."

"But oh, bethink thee!" said the Page, with a kindling countenance. "May not the heart of this woman whom thou forsakest, be pure as the spirits of light, save for the one dark shadow which thine image hath cast on it? May not her soul even now be occupied by thee—thee only—thee alone? May she not pass her hours in vain regrets that ye are separated, and

find joy in the sole thought that thou art likewise sighing after reunion? And what if this hope be taken from her? What if she were told, 'He whom thou lovest desireth to forget thee, and accounteth thee as a flower, fair, indeed, to look on, but noxious and poisonous?' Oh, bethink thee of the passionate tenderness of that woman's soul? Recall what hath passed between ye—every moment of converse—every utterance of sentiment,—every look of love? And *then* ask thy heart, how will she endure to feel herself forgotten, despised, and *scorned?* Hast thou never heard or read of the vengeance woman takes on him who *scorns* her?"

"Thy words are a mystery, as thou art," said Lewen, but his countenance was agitated, and his demeanour perturbed.

"In a word—in a word—," said

Altham, with rapid and tremulous utterance,—"hast thou no desire again to see—to converse with her?"

"God shield me from such peril!" ejaculated Lewen.

"Thou wouldst reject such opportunity then, if I were to tell thee that at midnight—this *very* midnight—I have power to conduct thee to her; that she *prays* thee, once again that ye may meet!" said Altham, and he spoke with that energy peculiar to those of strong imagination, who have the faculty of identifying themselves with the person for whom they supplicate.

"Yea, for I will not willingly seek temptation," replied Lewen; but Altham remarked that his cheek was pallid as death, and his eye emitted bright rays, which almost immediately subsided.

"Is it even so!" said the Page. "Well, even thus be it! Neither have I the inclination, nor hath she the de-

sire, that I press thee further. One word more; thou fearest not that danger in my society as in hers; receive *me*, at least, this night, receive me *here*, and prepare thyself for the discussion of matters of high import. Refuse me not," he added with a settled calmness, very distinct from the eagerness of his usual manner, "refuse me not! My heart bodes, that it will be our final interview."

"Thou art a visionary," said Lewen. "But be our meeting even as thou wilt."

"And if it *be* as I will, it will be but the first link in a chain of eternal length!" said the Page, regaining his ardour. "If it *be* as I will, thou shalt, hereafter, bless that meeting! And if it *be* not, even then thou, as a saint, *shouldst* bless me, seeing that I prepare a crown for thee so early. But the time wears, and I must be doing!

Lewen, at least now we part in amity; how we may next part, who can tell?"

Surprised at the almost frantic vehemence of the Page's manner, Lewen lost the power of reply, and before he had sufficiently collected himself, Altham had disappeared.

A degree of solemnity mingled itself with the feelings of Lewen, as he contemplated his approaching interview with the incomprehensible but yet irresistible Page. Afterwards he called the sensation that oppressed him, a foreboding of the events that were to mark that interview with a stamp so singular and extraordinary. Lewen felt as if he were about to be compelled to the development of every circumstance connected with himself, before one purpose, for which he had stooped to concealment, was effected. It seemed to him as if the whole fortune of his life were staked on one die, which

an invisible hand was to throw for him. Sometimes he traversed the apartment, anxiously desiring to hasten the arrival of the hour of decision; at others, he paused, as if willing to retard the flight of time, that was to bring to issue matters of whose real bearing and extent he knew nothing. All his past life returned upon him, and pressed heavily on his brain. The days passed with Ignatius,—the glorious visions and immortal hopes that had marked their progress,—arrayed themselves before him, and he contemplated them with hope and satisfaction. Then he remembered his arrival at Arding, and all that had passed there up to the present period. He felt, that the hopes and ecstacies which had, for a moment, engrossed him, were but visionary shadows, without substance and without duration. The melancholy of his soul did not abate, but it was tempered

with a gentler character; it was blended with a feeling of resignation to those events which might happen, on which no foresight could calculate, and, consequently, for which no prudence could prepare.

As the time of his interview with the Page advanced, his self-absorption increased. He regained, by a powerful act of the mind, his former indifference to worldly pursuits, except as they might tend to the advancement of eternal interests. Imagination might linger on that one brilliant hour of his existence, when it had been so powerfully excited, but devotion threw a veil over the picture, that shaded its glowing colours, and recalled the triumph *he* gained who had power to resist so great temptation. In the course of Lewen's existence, perhaps this—in spite of the visions of the boy, and the enthusiasm of the youth—might be selected as the

moment when *the saint* triumphed most completely over all the passions of *the man*.

The eye of Lewen was immoveably fixed on the door of his apartment, and his heart throbbed violently. In this moment in which calmness was most necessary to him, it entirely deserted him. He felt, that the thread whose intricate windings had so much embarrassed him, was about to be unravelled. Reason in vain suggested, that he expected only the appearance of a flippant Page. He recalled the various phases in which Altham had appeared to him, the extraordinary knowledge he had always displayed of the circumstances connected with Lewen, and particularly of that *being* who had so powerfully impressed him, and had appeared in so peculiar a manner. Above all, memory

was too faithful to linger lightly on the purport of his last conversation with the boy, and the avowed design for which he sought audience of Lewen at such an hour.

It was exactly midnight. Lewen's ear caught the first stroke of the far distant chimes, and he breathed not until the sound had entirely ceased. Then he relieved himself by a deep long sigh, and even at that moment his visitant appeared.

What was the form of that visitant, Lewen, at present, was unable to discover.

The figure was enveloped in the dark foldings of a monk's cloak, the cowl was drawn over the head and face, the whole arrangement evidently designed for disguise. For the first moments, Lewen believed that it was Valerius, who, on some inscrutable errand, thus stood before him. But

the comparatively low stature of his unknown guest compelled him to abandon such a suspicion, almost as soon as it was admitted. Then he believed, that Altham had assumed this habit, the better to escape animadversion on his untimely visit, if, perchance, he should meet some wakeful member of the household in his passage from his own apartment to this.

Whilst such thoughts were quickly passing over his brain, suspicion and conjecture were terminated by the guest.

The robe was thrown off; it was as the drawing aside of a cloud that obscured the sun; that exquisite female form stood radiant in the light of her beauty, with an air of imperious command and absolute majesty, which added height to her stature, and fire to her eye, and colour to her cheek. The white drapery that fell from her head, was drawn around her, and her arms

were folded on her bosom. There was pride in her port, and a fierce courage in her aspect, which assimilated better to the wild, empassioned character of a being whom it was impossible to class under the name of a species, than to the softness and tenderness of a fond woman. Lewen gazed on her with desperate resolution still to persevere in the lofty track he had marked out for himself; but his eye was fixed as by fascination on her countenance, and *some* sparkles of earthly passion shone in its luminous splendor.

She continued to stand before him silent and contemplative of him. Her soul seemed to be possessed by feelings that impetuously carried it onwards, and distanced the agitation and embarrassment natural to her situation. In that profound silence, her respiration, deep, but regular, was audible. It was a picture of *suspense*, first verging on

that point, whence the next step may probably precipitate it to *despair*. She came to the encounter, armed with resolution to meet the event, and prepared *to do*, as circumstances might command.

Lewen was unwilling to break this pause of intense interest. He perceived, that the crisis of life was arrived, and he would not, by premature eagerness, urge it onwards.

Still gazing on Lewen, she advanced a few steps, and as she did so, she trod on the monk's habit which had fallen around her.

" Behold," she said, looking down on it with a proud smile, " behold how a woman's passion tramples even on the symbols of that which woman's superstition holds most sacred !"

" And which man's *faith* most venerates !" said Lewen, giving emphasis to the word '*faith*', implying reproof, of

her having confounded it with superstition, and he stooped to take up the vestment.

She laid her hand on his shoulder. "Bend still—bend still—" she said, gently pressing him down. "Let me behold thee but once more, where thou hast formerly knelt with feelings never to be forgotten,—but once more let me behold thee there, and I will believe that *man's faith* can indeed be consistent and undeviating."

Lewen stood erect.

"The votary of the Most High must kneel only at his altar!" he said solemnly and coldly.

Her lip curled in bitter disdain. "Who then was *he* that knelt at an altar most unhallowed—even at that of earthly passion, a few short weeks since?" she demanded. "Aye, and in earnest supplication knelt there! Dost thou ask to whom? To *me*, to

very me, the woman who is now to be set at nought as a thing worthless and unvalued. Oh, where then was the piety, and the faith, and the vows, of the votary? Was it dissolved by the darkness, and the melody, and the so brilliant light, through which he passed, as through an ordeal, in that desolated fane where the ark no longer dwelt? And did he come unscorched from that ordeal? did his heart bear no traces of the flame that had played about it? did it immediately become stone?"

Lewen passed his hand over his brows. The conflict between the passion which was even now reviving in his heart with increased energy, and the feelings to which he believed it his duty entirely to surrender up his soul, became every instant more violent. He felt, that the being who had so touched his imagination, was now supplicating his love as a boon on which the happiness

of her existence depended. The persuasions of Valerius to induce him to enter the theatre of active life recurred to him, and never before presented themselves in so forcible a light. He remembered the absolution from his vows which the shade of Ignatius had pronounced over him, who appeared to have emerged from the gloom and the quiet of the grave for the sole purpose of bidding him pursue his love, and prosper. And then he recollected the arguments—the promises—the commands—with which the Queen had urged his resignation of those projects which had hitherto entirely occupied him, and to the execution of which he designed exclusively to devote himself. Above all,—*she*—the being of dazzling beauty—stood before him, offering herself to him, in all her brightness, and her infinity of passion.

Her eye had watched the fluctuations

of his countenance, and she seized this moment to decide the unsettled purpose of his heart.

"To me, then, thou wilt not bow down thyself," she said, with more tenderness than bitterness. "Behold me then—me, whom the universe could not have bowed—behold me a suppliant at thy feet!" she continued, suddenly sinking on the ground before Lewen, but even in that attitude of humiliation preserving the majesty of her perfect beauty. "And for what do I plead?" she said, in tones of intense passion. "For that love which thou hast offered me where none was witness of thy vows but invisible spirits, —where none listened save the deep solitude that encompassed us! It is mine—and I demand from thee my own! It was thy voluntary gift to me, and thou mayst not resume it! Oh,

thou knowest not how heavy is the debt thou hast contracted to me, and I demand but this in payment of the whole! God witnesseth for me, with what unwearied anxiety I have watched over thee,—with what persisting love I have guarded thee, despite of thy coldness and thy sometime scorn;—and I asked not even the poor tribute of thy thanks! I was contented to be thy bond slave—to minister to thy necessities without hope of recompense—without claiming thy gratitude—without showing myself unto thee! Was this a small thing to the heart of a proud woman? Was there aught but one passion that could thus have bowed down her soul? Estimate its grandeur by the multiplicity and the extent of the sacrifices to which that alone prompted me! Yea, Lewen—I have, indeed, watched over thee,—and it was

not the most supportable of my pains, that thou, whom I should have recognized beneath a veil thick as the blackest cloud that ever obscured the Heavens, did not discover *who* was always at hand to serve thee,—*who* hung so intensely on thy glances,—*who* was jealous of all others approaching thee,—*who* so easily penetrated the mystery of thy abode in the house of the Earl of Arding,—*who* now prostrates herself before thee? Lewen—Lewen—" she continued, and the energy of her manner betokened the agony that tortured her heart and fired her brain; "have I not told thee, that our meeting might be the first link in a chain of eternal length? Hast thou not boded somewhat of the discovery now to be made? Hast thou not solved at once all the mysteries of that Page's inconsistencies—his wild passion—his melancholy levity—his devotedness to thee—by stripping

the mask from his face—and, calling him WOMAN?

She covered her face with her hands, and shrunk from the scrutiny of him who stood before her,—the arbiter of her fate—the lord of her destiny. Her silence was deep and breathless; she seemed to recall all thoughts into her soul, as if by doing so, she could conceal herself from that observation which she had courted, but from which she now recoiled. The impassioned feelings that had, hitherto, supported her, sunk beneath the shame of a woman, who felt herself the suppliant where she ought to be approached with supplication; who had forgotten all the timidity and patience of her sex, carried along by the impetuosity of one violent passion. It was the triumph of nature; it was the moment of her successful vindication of her rights; and habit, and education, sunk powerless

beneath her deep and commanding voice.

Lewen, oppressed with an immediate conviction of her identity with the Page, overwhelmed by a torrent of circumstances which rushed over his mind, and seemed in a moment to multiply themselves to infinity, was distracted by a tumult of contending emotions, which threatened to hurl his reason from her seat. She who now kneeled prostrate and subdued before him,—veiling her face from the gaze of him for whom she had endured so much,—for whose love she had so painfully striven,—for which she had made continual sacrifices,—had been his companion,—his familiar friend,—his comforter in adversity, his soother in pain,—under a character how different!—in a garb how inappropriate! He recollected the ardour with which, on one oc-

casion, she had asserted the supremacy of the passions, and the fierce zeal with which she had maintained her experience of them,—when *he*—the very object who had inflamed them to such distracting height,—had coldly argued on the possibility of their existing in her mind, had derided her youth, and had taunted her inexperience. And she had borne all this with patience never wearied, had again approached him with inexhaustible love! Even now she was supplicating that love to which she had made for herself an almost inalienable right. What weapons did she employ? Beauty—intellect—passion! Was it in the heart of man to resist such a combination? Did the universe of causes afford one sufficiently potent to repel it? Yes, and that one was in the heart of Lewen even now.

Honours—wealth—rank; the love of

kindred and the favour of a monarch; he had already sacrificed on the altar to which he had devoted himself. Hitherto he had risen victorious over the temptations offered by love;—could he, in this moment of powerful—perhaps of final—danger, could he render unavailing every former victory, and make defeat more conspicuous and yet more abject, by yielding to the fury of the flames when the ordeal was nearly past?

It was the most exulting moment of Lewen's life. Religious enthusiasm —the passion of devotion—triumphed over all the allurements of the senses and the imagination.

During his pause of indecision, so full of alternate hope and fear to her who was kneeling before him, she had withdrawn her hands from her face, and her eyes were fixed on his with intense

and undeviating watchfulness. As his perturbation had become more apparent, —as the fluctuations of his colour had become more decided,—the pulsation of her own heart had beat high with anticipated triumph. But the indication of final resolution was the restoration of calmness to his whole appearance, and the fading of his complexion to its usual paleness. Then hope subsided, and she retained energy by despair alone. Her cheek became as pale as his, but her eye flashed with intense brilliancy. She did not rise from her attitude of humiliation, but her figure seemed to dilate, and its majesty to become more decided.

"Kneel not to me," said Lewen, with solemnity, but there was a stain of earthly tenderness in the composed gravity of his demeanour; "kneel rather to that God whom you offend,

by thus submitting to the guidance of the Evil One, in spreading snares for the feet of him, who would tread humbly but faithfully in the path to which he hath devoted himself. Love!" he continued, and his countenance became very radiant; "I will have no earthly love; I will draw riches from the inexhaustible treasury of God's love to a lost world! Whither shall I betake me, if I neglect so great salvation? What shall a man gain in exchange for his soul? Beautiful, dangerous, but frail creature!" he added, gazing with a spark of melancholy fondness on the exquisite being before him, whose features were all stamped with the livid fire of despair, but of that despair which partook rather of energy than calmness. "How hardly have I escaped from the temptation wherewith thou hast tempted me! And yet, perhaps, this last

fiery trial was necessary to prepare me for the work I have undertaken! Thou art but an instrument in the hands of Omnipotence! And, oh, let *me* persuade thee to resign thyself for ever a vestal bride to the arms of thy Creator! Once in thy manly character, thou wast vowed to me, suffer me to claim my convert even now! Enter on the sacred life which thou mayst adorn, where thou wilt neither tempt, nor be tempted, to utter and irretrievable woe! Beautiful being! let there be joy in Heaven,—let *me* have joy—in redeeming a lost one from perdition! Forsake a world too dangerous to be trodden by thy tender feet, too thorny to permit a thing so soft as thou, to escape unwounded! Become God's only! Let thy passion be directed to Him! Love Him with uncontrolled fervour, and fearlessly! Become a saint,—become, in truth, the angel thou appearest!

Thou wast adorned with all this magnificence of beauty, a meet bride for the Lamb! What earthly being may be worthy of thee, what *man* may deserve thee!"

She arose, and stood erect before him. Bitter and ineffable scorn stamped every beautiful feature, and sparkled in the fierce splendour of her eye. Her pale lip curled and trembled. She essayed to speak, but the violence of her feelings checked the effort. She stood in silence, and her bosom heaved with the effort of convulsion.

Lewen gazed on her with tenderness and with pity, but the purpose of his soul was not shaken. He passionately desired to win this splendid creature to Heaven. "Wilt thou—wilt thou—" he said in a tone of as powerful persuasion, of as deep pathos as her own had been—"wilt thou devote thyself on earth to God, and in realms of bliss

hereafter become my bride—my companion—through eternity?"

The vehemence of her disdain, at this moment, *writhed* her features, and a momentary convulsion passed over them. By a very strong effort she collected herself to speak, and her countenance seemed to glow more radiantly as she did so.

"Well mayest thou estimate thus lightly the thing thou hast *scorned!*" she said. "And dost thou so little know of the soul of that Page who hath dwelt familiarly with thee, of that woman who hath *thus* appeared before thee, as to dare expect, that she will be deluded into a belief of the reality of the insubstantial bauble thou wouldst present to her, which thou wouldst palm on her as a worthy return for the intense—the everlasting passion—she has lavished on thee? Prate of an eternal union to the fools who reject what time

can offer, in the pursuit of that captivating vision! Wouldst thou insult thy God by offering to Him that which would not have been His, but that His creature rejected it!" Impious mockery! Sacrilegious profaneness! Yet—oh, yet—bethink thee, Lewen!—now, even now, I am thine! A second time *scorned*,—oh, believe, *then*, that repentance may come bitter and too late!"

"God help and pity thee, poor, lost one! Tempt me not with the light of thy beauty; I am vowed, and even now in this desperate moment,—I renew—I confirm my vows!"

Scarcely had these words been pronounced by Lewen, when the form that had hitherto stood erect before him, fell, pale and apparently overpowered, in his arms. He supported her,—but even then earthly passion was subdued. In

that moment, Lewen was entirely devoted to Heaven. Her eyes were fixed on him,—*his* were directed upwards. He felt that the form which reclined on his bosom was violently agitated, and he guarded himself from contemplating it at that dangerous moment. She clung to him closely—fondly. His own pressure relaxed. He groaned—reeled—fell.

A dagger had pierced his side, directed by the hand of the woman he had scorned. The blood of life flowed abundantly from the wound, forcing itself through his garments, and covering her who had drawn it.

She kneeled beside him as he lay prostrate there. His dying eye was fixed on her, and its expression was of pity and forgiveness.

"I have shed thy blood—thy life-blood!" she said, in a low deep voice;

"that blood, for which I had thought the best that flowed in these veins too small a price! Alas, Lewen!—yet most happy Lewen!—happy even in that thou diest without guilt—even now beguiled by the blissful delusion of immortal joys and celestial happiness! And thou forgivest me, I see thou dost! But thinkest thou, that I—the woman who loved thee more than her own soul,—who adored thee even in thy scorn of her,—will ever forgive thy murderess! Never—never—by this kiss—the first—the last—cold—cold as holy!—Lewen, thus I avenge thee!"

He saw the steel enter that beautiful bosom. With a mighty effort he raised himself to prevent the deed of despair; but he was too late, and in the next moment he fell back unconscious of all; his soul had escaped from its prison, and was standing before the tribunal of Omnipotence.

Even in that instant another form stood before the murderess—the suicide! There was horror in his aspect, as he contemplated the scene before him. "Elvira!" he said fearfully.

"Who calls?" she asked calmly, raising herself on her arm, and leaning over Lewen. "Not thou! not thou! Thou art silent for ever and ever! No word shall I hear from thee again,—no sound shall ever more issue from those lips—cold—cold—as the heart that broke mine! Poor Lewen, who hast received thy death-blow from the hand that should have warded off all danger from thee!" Then she became conscious of the presence of the Confessor. "Is it you, Father? What do *you* here? 'Twere better you had not witnessed this scene. Suffer me, at least, to *die* without counsel. Do you want to confess me? Very soon all may be

told; he scorned me,—I killed—and I avenged him! You will give me absolution, Father! But, I thank you, I will none on't!" She paused, and turned again to Lewen. She placed her hand on his heart, and the death-pang came on her own. "Father!" she said, turning quickly and fiercely to Valerius; "he is dead, and the deed—the damned deed—is thine! Thou knowest how thou hast tempted—tortured—allured me onwards; and if, on the brink of the precipice, I became dizzy and dashed into the profound abyss,—*thy* hand—thine only—led me thither. I was young—very young;—and I loved,—even to the death as thou seest! And thy voice assured me, that I might touch this heart with a passion stained with the earth as my own was; and I have well proved thy truth,—I *have*

touched it—and it is cold as the steel that pierced it—quiet as soon shall be the hand that sought out that heart! Father, I die—and the fiends tear me! Not the devils of *thy* fables,—but fierce women—scorned—derided—and taking vengeance for themselves! The snakes of their hair hiss loudly in my ears:—Father!" she screamed, "they groan, and howl, and deafen me to my own voice,—I cannot hear the words my tongue utters. Father, their black shadow stands between me and Lewen, and I see him no longer,—they are tearing me from him! Pray, pray, Father,—if prayer would ever avail, surely now! They laugh—they cling to me—they crush me—they shut out from me all sounds—all sights—but theirs! Lewen!—Lewen!—I see him now—they show him to me;—he mounts far upwards—far—far amongst

the clouds!—Up! I will after him!" She struggled violently. "They pinion me down," she screamed, making an effort with her hands as if to release herself; "they bind me to this iron couch—they shut him out from me! But he sails along—amidst light and sunshine—and he will bear me with him, for did he not vow that I should be his eternal bride? Aye, and though I rejected it then, I repent me of it!—in sooth—in sooth, Father, I repent me

Her voice had gradually sunk into a whisper. The last words were almost inaudible. Valerius placed his hand on her heart when she had ceased to speak; that was silent also; its throbbing was still for ever. He stooped,—he pressed those lips, yet warm with the last sigh. He looked long and lingeringly on the perfect beauty of that

pale countenance, still exquisitely lovely in the arms of death. With a sigh he arose, and quitting that apartment in which his two victims had bled, he hastened from the house of the Lord of Arding, for ever.

CHAPTER XXII.

———"Oh, she is gone for ever !
I know when one is dead, and when one lives ;
She's dead as earth."

"I might have saved her ; now she's gone for ever !"

———"Oh, thou wilt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never !"
Shakspeare.

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"THERE are beings who are born to be the victims of turbulent passions not the slaves of one. Once drawn into the vortex, they may be dashed against the rock ; still they make no effort to escape ; they plunge back into

the centre, and another breeze rises, and another wave hurries them onward. And that rolls away, but still another and another succeeds it, even until the *ninth* has beaten them against the fatal shore, and perchance crushed them to annihilation.

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"Osmund Boucher was the child of a wayward fortune, and the sport of a heart whose impulses were all violent and irregular. He had no father, he had no mother. He had neither brother to love nor sister to protect. In the wide world he stood, or seemed to himself to stand, alone. There was but one on whom he had a claim of affinity; this was the Baron of Trelaune, his uncle. From him he enjoyed all the advantages which powerful protection and splendid revenues could procure. Lord Trelaune was the guardian of his *person*, but he

was quite unqualified to guide the *mind* of a boy, whose intellects were of that order which developes prematurely, and whose passions were likely to unfold themselves as early. The Baron had the finest hawks and hounds, the best falconer and huntsman in England. The royal Henry himself had praised the flight of his birds, and the sagacity of the scent of his dogs. Devoted to these pursuits, he permitted his nephew to indulge unboundedly in those reveries of imagination, which are at once delicious and fatal, kindling the passions to their highest pitch of excitement, and preparing them for that keen sensibility to disappointment, which is the curse of existence.

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"Osmund's ambition was of a nature to triumph over every obstacle that might impede its high flight. There was but

one passion which divided its empire, that was *love.* He was very young, but he loved with invincible ardour. Elvira was more beautiful than the pictures, which his heated imagination had sketched, of those bright intelligences that people higher worlds. His reveries strangely blended love and devotion. His visits to the monastery in the neighbourhood of Lord Trelaune's castle, had been very frequent, and he had pored with eagerness over the tomes penned by holy men, which were considered amongst the treasures of the convent. At one period, his imagination was so strongly affected by them, that he too had his visions and his inspirations. The monks encouraged his ejaculations, and animated by the applause they bestowed on him with a desire to acquire more, he feigned yet brighter visions, and strengthened the colourings of his dreams by embellishing them with such

consistent fictions as were furnished by his waking fancy. By degrees, he himself was deluded into a belief of their reality, and became deceived in that very point in which he had first deceived others. He might have sacrificed ambition on this altar of enthusiasm, but a yet stronger passion was soon excited, and put to flight every desire of gaining distinction as a saint peculiarly favoured by Heaven, to whom were vouchsafed visions prophetic of the future. But the foundation of his zealous attachment to the true and Catholic faith, was, at this time, laid, and he learned to consider the advancement of the interests of the holy church as a duty essential on all men, as much on the laity as on priests. This conviction was strong, and it remained to the last, never weakening or ceasing to act on him effectually.

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"The hours which he passed with Elvira, indulging in all the delicious fulness of reciprocal love, were never to be forgotten. It was the most blissful period of his existence, and the most fatal. His sterner nature was softened by the tenderness which occupied him, and every rougher feeling of his heart was melted down by it.

Elvira was very gentle, and the better to assimilate himself to her, he nurtured and cultivated that sensibility which was already too predominant in his mind. Insensibly all those passions which could, in any ways, contribute to the advancement of his love, were strengthened. He became more ambitious of wealth and honour because Elvira was to share them with him, and bless them to him. Lord Trelaune knew, that his nephew contemplated his union with Elvira as an event which nothing, but some fatal cause,—as death,—could pre-

vent. He cared not after the amusement with which his heir chose to occupy himself, whilst his hawks and hounds were within call. If this had been always the case, Osmund would never have had cause to curse him. But the huntsman and the falconer quarrelled on some question of pre-eminence, and the former struck his dagger into the eye of the latter. Thus the falconer was blinded for ever, and the huntsman constrained to flee. Lord Trelaune would gladly have exerted his influence to protect the criminal, but the huntsman, overcome by his fears, doubted his Lord's power, and thought to secure his safety better by flight. He went, and the Baron was wearied for the lack of that society to which he had been accustomed. He sought more after his nephew, and for very weariness became anxious after the pursuits of his heir. He desired even to see Elvira;

and Osmund, proud of her beauty, was eager to promote the interview. So the uncle and nephew, with a gallant retinue, went in great state to the castle of Elvira's Father.

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"Lord Trelaune was not forty. He was idle and in search of some stimulus to existence. Elvira was very beautiful; he gazed on her with more admiration than on the most freely-winged hawk or the fleetest greyhound he had ever possessed. Osmund enjoyed the tribute he paid to her surpassing loveliness, and encouraged it by placing his mistress in the most advantageous points of view, and in eulogizing her to his uncle. The effect was complete. The Baron declared himself the lover of Elvira, the rival of his heir. In vain, Osmund upbraided, menaced, entreated. Opposition added fuel to the flame, and gave

it the only additional excitement it needed. The parents of Elvira were gratified with the prospect of alliance with a noble of distinguished name and magnificent revenue. They preferred him who already *possessed* and had the *power* to disinherit, to him who was only *expectant*, and who *might* be disinherited. Osmund pleaded his precontract, which, by the laws of the land, rendered null any marriage contracted with another. This was an argument of some weight, and one to which Lord Trelaune, and the parents of Elvira were obliged to attend.

"There was but one means of bending the purpose of his soul, and to that they resorted.

"Osmund had adored the gentleness of Elvira's heart, but he had not calculated on its alliance with equal pliancy of disposition. He did not know how hard it is for such a heart to resist the persua-

sions of those to whom it is bound by the strong ties of natural affection. He did not know, that it has no power of re-action, but moves exactly in obedience to the propelling force.

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"Elvira had the heart to declare to Osmund with those very lips which had so often reciprocated vows of fidelity, that it were better to resign themselves to the course of events, than, by opposing them, to draw down irremediable ruin on themselves. She was unwilling, she said, to give him pain, but in this instance it was unavoidable, because she had resolved in all things to be governed by the will of those who had certainly the best right to guide her. Neither would she be the willing occasion of drawing upon him the eternal enmity of his uncle. When he considered everything, she felt that he would perceive

the necessity of their final separation; and destroy that contract which alone now bound them to each other,

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"Osmund beheld the preparations that were made for the nuptials of Lord Trelaune and his own betrothed bride, with calmness. So little extravagance appeared in his demeanour, that they who were most interested in his quietude, believed that he had already forgotten his youthful passion. Deluded by his apparent indifference, they ceased to watch him so narrowly, and he was once more free.

It was a very fine, star-light night when he quitted the castle of Trelaune. Beneath a sky as resplendent, he had aforetime whispered vows of love to her who had forgotten them. Memory presented a thousand images to his brain, each sufficient to fire it. Distracted by

overwhelming emotions, he hastened onwards, and presented himself at the gates of the convent.

He deluded the credulous monks into a belief of his having obeyed a celestial vision in his demand of admittance amongst their number. They received him joyfully, and promised him not only security from the power of Lord Trelaune, but complete concealment from him. This was the point which he desired to attain, and he hailed the little difficulty with which he *had* attained it, as auspicious of final success. *Osmund Boucher* was lost in the pious Brother Valerius.

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The fame of the extraordinary sanctity of the young votary, drew rich gifts and wealthy pilgrims to the shrine of De-la-pray. All his youthful feelings of devotion and zeal for the interests of

the church, revived amidst scenes so calculated for their display, and he might have been happy but for that burning desire of vengeance which continually recurred, in those intervals when nature, exhausted by an unnatural enthusiasm, sunk into calmness and quiet.

"His eye was never removed from the domestic concerns of Lord Trelaune. The family Confessor inhabited his convent, and from him he obtained such information as interfered not with his professional vow of secrecy. The Baron had replaced his falconer and his huntsman by others not less skilful, and Lady Trelaune was left to the indulgence of such humours as she pleased. *Valerius* might have felt, that this dull routine of life, this absence of all endearing affection, was sufficient punishment for a fatal pliancy of mind. But *Osmund Boucher* could not forget that he had been deserted, and that such passive punishment was insufficient.

"The Abbot died, and by unanimous consent the pious Valerius was advanced to the vacant dignity. Then he meditated the near accomplishment of his plans.

"Absence and time had not changed his passionate love for Elvira, but they had given it a fiercer character. His devotional feelings were not of that nature, that would have prompted him to check it. They aimed rather at the universal establishment of the Catholic faith, than at amendment of his own heart and life. And he had lived amongst scenes where the purity of either was esteemed matter of very small moment.

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"'Absorbed by the ardour of her revived feelings for Osmund, Elvira regretted neither her seclusion in the convent, nor her sacrilegious disguise,*

* It is well known that, at the time of the Reformation, so great were the abuses in monas-

She mingled with the novices as one of them. If her sex was suspected, it was, at least, never alluded to. And Valerius triumphed in satisfied love and revenge, and in his reputation of unblemished sanctity.

" But there were whispers abroad not to the advantage of the De-la-pray community. At the suggestion of Cromwell, search was made into its practices ; and the result terminated, as in these cases it generally did, in the suppression of the monastery. The distress of Valerius was at its height, not for himself, for he had already secured an asylum in the adjacent castle of Arding, whose Countess was entirely under his spiritual guidance. But Elvira was about to

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teries, that a woman's habiting there in the disguise of an ecclesiastic, was no unusual circumstance, and contributed to the great scandal attached to religious houses. *Vide* BURNET'S account of the Visitation to Monasteries in the Reign of Henry the 8th, &c.

make him a father, to bring into the world a being, even from the hour of its birth, stigmatised with the curse attendant on the guilt of its parents.

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"In the midst of desolation Elvira gave birth to a female infant, and expired. The ruins of De-la-pray were at once the sepulchre of the mother and the cradle of the child. In the subterraneous apartments of the monastery it continued to exist, watched over by the remnant of that community of which Joanna, Countess of Arding, was professed a member, and which found an asylum there. All the affections of Valerius's heart were centered in this child; and his ambition desired to decorate her with those honours, of which yet stronger passions had deprived her. And there was a means by which that ambition might be satisfied. Ye

Fathers! condemn not that father who felt it within his grasp and hesitated not to seize it.. The young Raymond Evelyn, the heir of the far-descended Earl of Arding, was the object destined by Valerius to become the husband of his child.

" At this time, Archibald Shirley, a strict and devout Catholic, was the Page of the Countess of Arding. Valerius, who from his position in the family, had a strong influence over the mind of the youth, represented to him the meritorious service he would render to God, and eventually to the young Evelyn himself, by removing him from the guidance of his heretic father, and placing him where his eternal salvation might be secured. Shirley came readily into the plan, and every measure was arranged by Valerius to perform the deed, and to conceal the perpetrator of

it. To this point all succeeded, but farther all was adverse.

"'Archibald Shirley conveyed the young Raymond to Ignatius de Loyola with whom Valerius was in habits of friendly correspondence; but he overstepped the letter of his instructions. He thought it not sufficient to educate the boy a rigid Catholic, but he desired to render him a saint, whose piety should expiate the sins of his heretic father, to whom Shirley, notwithstanding the difference of their religious opinions, bore a strong hereditary attachment. Ignatius de Loyola came readily into the plan, and Evelyn from his cradle was educated a crucifier of the flesh, and vowed to the exclusive service of the sanctuary.

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"Valerius beheld, with exquisite

pleasure, the gradual expansion of the beautiful flower that grew in the still shade of the ruins of De-la-pray.' He desired to give to his young pupil a soul of as much energy as her mother had possessed softness. He opened the stores of his own mind, and infused into her's that erudition, so irregular, that feeling so empassioned, which had once distinguished him. He added to this continual descriptions of Raymond Evelyn, occupying her young heart entirely with him, and preparing her for the reception of that unbounded love which was to prove so fatal. If that part of his plans which regarded Evelyn himself had been as strictly adhered to, success would have been almost certain. But it was not so, and he was baffled.

"Shirley communicated to Valerius the pious bent of the mind of the young Evelyn, and he was immediately

charged to see that Raymond returned to Arding.

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"Elvira was introduced by Valerius into the castle as the Page of the Countess of Arding, under which character it was intended, that she should gain a certain influence over the mind of Raymond Evelyn before she appeared to him in her own. Whilst occupied thus, the passion of the unhappy girl arrived at a height which required all the skill of Valerius to manage it. It entirely absorbed her, and revealed to the father the terrible secret of her infidelity. He had not calculated on this evil, when he had bestowed on her ardent mind that cultivation necessary to detect hypocrisy, and had permitted it to obtain an insight into truth by what means it might. Admiring with enthusiasm

those men of ancient days whom he had pourtrayed to her, she had adopted their opinions as the guides of her life, and had wrought to this fatal issue.

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"But Raymond Evelyn was neither to be tempted, nor persuaded, nor convinced. In vain *the Page* derided, in vain the father intreated and argued. His passions were next touched, and in woman's guise Elvira met him in the ruins of De-la-pray, where all that could fascinate and subdue his senses had been collected by means of Valerius. And they had well nigh succeeded, and Valerius anticipated triumph. His next attack was made on the superstition of Evelyn. Archibald Shirley had sent over to the Father a *wax mask* of the features of Ignatius de Loyola, and concealing his own countenance beneath it, he had personated the founder of

the Society of Jesus, and found no difficulty in imposing himself on Evelyn as the *risen dead.* In this character, he had absolved him from his vows, and bade him pursue the interests of his love and prosper. The joy with which this injunction was received, had awakened the most sanguine anticipations of the future. But, too secure, Valerius for a time suffered the imagination of Evelyn to remain inactive, and thus rendered all former efforts fruitless.

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" Behold, then, behold this fatal mystery solved! Ye who will contemplate the bodies of the bleeding pair, tell me if aught fairer was to be found beneath the sun? She was my very pride and my joy, my hope and my life! And what was her dying word? *almost* a curse on the head of her father! But she knew me not, and therein, though other-

wise guilty, she was most innocent! And you, Lord of Arding, by no means compare your loss with mine! You have not watched over the growth of your child, as I did; you have not hailed the daily progress of mind and body, as I have; your ambition and your hopes have not been bound to that one point as mine were.—Aye, he died indeed! but in that moment his spirit soared to Heaven, for he expired bearing witness to its supremacy! His whole life vouches for his immortal glory! It has been one act of positive duty. Nothing was of power to draw him from the seclusion he had chosen, but the persuasion that he was destined by Heaven to win the soul of his heretic father back to itself, and offer up this most acceptable offering to the Most High, as the first fruits of his faith. Every action of his, during his sojourn with you, tended to this end; and he

had entered on his task the earlier and openly, but that I prevented him; for *my* designs required him to pursue another path. And for my unhappy girl—I may not speak of her, for my brain kindles, and I would very fain preserve my reason a little longer for the purpose of expiation. On that eventful night I awaited her egress from the apartment of Evelyn, as we had agreed, that I might learn the issue of their interview. The hour passed when she should have appeared, and she came not, and my heart boded ominously, and I entered!——

"I flee for ever from that world which hath cost me so much. I shall not blast your sight again, Lord of Arding! In deep and heart-broken penitence, I shall do out my remnant of life, praying Heaven to accept my pains and penance here, in mitigation of the torments into which the soul of my lost one is plunged.

For this end only, I desire yet to live, that so the memory of my past transgressions and this terrible consummation of them may be blotted out.

"To the unhappy Lady of Arding I have but one consolation to offer. When she shall feel, that her punishment is greater than she can bear, and that woe hath accumulated on her to the utmost, let her remember the agony—the remorse—the bitterness of suffering, which wrings the heart of Valerius!"

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Such were the contents of the MS. which conveyed to the Earl of Arding all the explanation he could ever obtain of the fatal scene, which awaited him on the first morning that rose on the dead bodies of Raymond Evelyn and Elvira.

The grief of the Earl was profound, but it was not of that overwhelming nature

which threatened both the life and reason of the Countess. He had never indulged the shadow of a hope of regaining his lost heir, and had received ample consolation in the happy promise of Blanche. But the whole of the Countess's existence of late years, had been occupied with the prospect of this event. She had contemplated the promised restoration of her son, by which Valerius had maintained his unbounded influence over her, as the period in which her penance for a broken vow would be completed. And now this hope was wrenched from her in the most terrible manner. She *had* regained her son, but he was only an inanimate corpse. The hope of seeing him once again had been gratified, and its accomplishment occasioned her only more abundant sorrow. The world, always distasteful to her since her loss of that son, now became hateful, and on his

grave she vowed to consecrate the remaining portion of her days to the God whom she had forsaken in her youth.

The Earl opposed not a resolution founded on such a basis. Neither did the retirement of his Countess occasion to him much positive unhappiness. During some years, she had been as entirely separated from him, as if already secluded in the shade of a convent. Her inhabiting his castle had been a source of discomfort rather than of happiness to him. It had occasioned a division of his domestics, and consequent dissensions in his household, for which it offered no equivalent advantage. It had exposed him to the continual observation of a Priest of opposite faith, who was incessantly occupied in endeavours to bring into contempt, amongst his own domestics, that religion which their Lord professed. The pang of the last *farewell* from her who had been the

only beloved of his youth, once endured, the Earl revived to reflect on the means of happiness yet within his reach, and to find abundant matter of consolation in the restored health of his beautiful heir, Blanche Evelyn.

The unhappy death of the illustrious Lady Jane Grey, and of her youthful husband, completed that disgust at the government of Mary, which her arbitrary measures had inspired. The zealous Russell never entirely forgave his patron's espousing that cause, which he denominated the papal one; whilst the Earl, however much he lamented the results, did not repent of an action, which had been founded on motives purely conscientious. But he and his family mourned as sincerely for the untimely death, Russell called it *murder*, of Jane Grey, as their chaplain himself did. The roses of Blanche's cheek again faded, and she drooped, for a

time, at this violent rending asunder of the bonds of affection which had so closely united her to Jane. But, youth is not the season for the indulgence of settled melancholy; and although, during her whole existence, there were moments in which memory presented to her the tender friend of her early years, now on a throne, now on a scaffold, they were succeeded by reflections on the eternal recompense far beyond earthly felicity which that friend was even now receiving.

It was one of the most generous actions of Mary's life, that she protected the families of Arding and Leighton from those religious persecutions, which render her reign infamous to all posterity. They retired from the court, and secluded themselves in their separate castles, until the marriage of Blanche with Lord Leighton, when the castle of Arding became the common home of

both families. The only person who expressed any sort of dissatisfaction at the nuptials was Shirley, and he could not be made to perceive the expediency of that absence of all pomp and ostentation which marked their arrangements. "Where," said he, "is the noble assemblage of Lords and Ladies which ought to celebrate the union of two such houses? Where are the jousts at which the bride should preside, and bestow the prizes with her own fair hand? Where are the revellings that should gladden all the country round? Tell me no grandames' tales of fittingness! Who would dare to gainsay us, defended by the armed retinue that might be mustered at our bidding? Tell not me of desiring the preservation of the peace of the country! What care I for peace? I tell you I have altogether too much of it, since I have lived to see the heir of Arding married, and

no lance broken—no cavalier unhorsed, at the celebration of the nuptials!"

When Shirley was made acquainted with the real history of Lewen and Altham, it was observed that the name of either escaped his lips no more. Sometimes when he frequented those scenes in which he had reproved the flippancy of the woman-page, or complained of it to him who bore the revered name of Raymond Evelyn, a tear rolled down his cheek, and a sigh agitated him. But he shook off the depression as soon as he could with "*God's will be done!*" and thereto he resigned himself.

The fate of Raymond Evelyn was never forgotten by his father, or his sister. His remains and those of the woman who loved and murdered him, were consigned to the mausoleum in which his ancestors reposed. On his grave the Earl and his daughter were accustomed to kneel in solemn prayer and to

recall those circumstances of his residence in the castle, which seemed to render them familiar with him who had been otherwise a stranger to them. In his whole life and conduct there was every thing to adorn the lineage from which he sprung; others had woven the tissue of misfortune which had shipwrecked him; he was altogether pure, guiltless, and holy.

The reign of Mary was short, and on the accession of Elizabeth, to the great joy of Shirley, the families of Arding and Leighton emerged from their retirement, and shone forth in their native splendor. Above all, the ancient domestic had the happiness of doing homage to the future Earl of Arding in the eldest son of Blanche, by whom Elizabeth permitted that illustrious title to descend to posterity.

FINIS.

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